The Great Duty OF RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE WILL IN Afflictions,

Enforced from the Example of our Suffering SAVIOUR.

By William Bates, D. D.

Nihil fit visibiliter & sensibiliter, quod non de interiori, invisibili, & intelligibili aula summi Imperatoris, aut jubeatur, aut permittatur in ista totius Creaturæ amplissima quadam immensaq; Republica. Aug. lib. tert. de Trin.

LONDON,

Printed by *J. D.* for *Brabazon Aylmer*, at the three Pigeons over against the Royal-Exchange in *Cornhil*, 1684.

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By William Law, A. M.

LONDON,
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THE PREFACE.

THE first Man by Rebellion against his Maker, lost his Innocence and Felicity, and conveyed a sad inheritance of Sin and Misery to his Universal Progeny: Ever since it has been esteemed a principal part of Wisdom to prepare the Minds of Men to encounter with innumerable Evils that surround them,

and to preserve a well-order'd, contented state of Soul, when actually under the greatest Afflictions. All the famous Sophy's *of the World, the most celebrated Professors of Patience, could not attain to this Skill. Their consolatory Discourses composed with Wit and Eloquence, are like artificial fruits of Wax, that seem to surpass the productions of Nature, but can only please the sight, and afford no real refreshment to the taste. Or, like Rings of Steel that are joined by the attractive virtue of the Load-stone, that make a Chain*

fair

fair to the Eye, but of no ſtrength and uſe. It was inexcuſable Ignorance, their not reſolving Temporal Evils to their proper Original, the righteous Providence of God. They erected a blind & fooliſh Power under the title of Fortune, to preſide in this Sphere of mutability; they always boaſt of their playing a Prize with Fortune, and triumph over a Phantome of their own Fiction. This Conceit was both impious and uncomfortable; impious, to take the Scepter of Government from God's hand, and attribute to that fooliſh Pleaſure

Plin. l. 2. c. 7.

Sed tantum cum fortuna ſe digladiari momentis omnibus gloriantur. Lact *lib. 3.*

of Fortune, what is ordered by his Providence: and uncomfortable, for they fancied their Deity to be blind, without discerning between the worthy and unworthy, and inexorable to the complaints of the injured, and the Prayers of the miserable. The common Topicks from whence they hardned themselves are, That none are exempted in this open state from Afflicting accidents, the common tribute of Mankind; that 'tis in vain to struggle with what is irresistible, that Death is the balm and close of all Evils. And the best of their

moral

moral Arguments for Patience under Sufferings, such as the dignity of the reasonable Soul; and that nothing inferior to it should have power, or is worthy to put it into confusion; that Vertue is the noblest Perfection, and is encreas'd by the most difficult Exercise; that 'tis best to yield up our selves to the Divine disposal. These Arguments are with infinite more advantage propounded in the Sacred Scriptures: and for Christians to attend to the instructions of natural Reason, and neglect the Divine Revelations of the Gospel, is

a folly like that of the silly Indians *of* Mexico, *who having plenty of Wax, the natural work of the Bees, yet* [redacted] *made use of Fire-brands to light them in the Night, that afforded a little Light mixt with a great deal of Smoak. Briefly, they had but wavering conjectures of the future State, and the recompences thereof, from whence are derived the most powerful Motives of Active and Passive Obedience to the commanding and disposing Will of God; But in the Scripture are laid down in the clearest manner, and with infallible*

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assurance, such Principles as are effectual to compose the Mind to patient Suffering, and to meet with valiant Resolution all the terrible contrarieties in the way to Heaven. It declares, that Sin opened an entrance unto all the current adversities in the World, which are the evident signs of God's displeasure against it. In anguish we are apt to dispute with Providence, and an imagination of Innocence kindles Discontent: Of this impatience, some even of the best Moral Heathens were guilty; Titus *and* Germanicus

 charged

charged the Gods with their untimely, and in their apprehenſion undeſerved Deaths; but the due ſence of Sin will humble and quiet the Mind under Sufferings, it directs us to conſecrate our Sorrows, to turn the flowing Stream into the Channel of Repentance. And thus the Paſſion of Grief, which, if terminated on external Troubles, is barren and unprofitable, it can neither retrieve our loſt Comforts, nor remove any oppreſſing Evil; if it be imployed for our offences, prepares us for Divine Mercy, and is infinitely beneficial to

us.

us. And thus by curing the Cause of Afflictions, our Guilt that deserves them, we take away the malignity and poison of them. The Word of God assures us, that all the perturbations and discords in the passages of our Lives are ordered by his Wisdom and Will, so that without extinguishing the two eyes of Reason and Faith, we must acknowledg his Providence, and observe his design in all, which is either to excite us when guilty of a careless neglect, or remiss performance of our Duty, or to reclaim us from our excursions and de-

viations

viations from the narrow way that leads to Life. Indeed there is nothing more common nor more fatal, than for afflicted persons to seek by carnal diversions and contemptible comforts to overcome their Melancholy, and the sense of Divine Judgments; and hereby they add new Guilt, and provoke new displeasures. This presages and accelerates final Ruine; for such whom Afflictions do not reform, are left as incorrigible.

Isa. 22. 12, 13, 14.

But above all encouragements, the Gospel sets before us the Sufferings of our Redeemer,

deemer, and directs all his Disciples in sincerity to accustom themselves to the contemplation and expectation of Troubles on Earth; it tells them 'tis a branch of their Religion, to Suffer with him that they may Reign with him. *And what is more reasonable, than if our Saviour endured superlative Sufferings to purchase Eternal Glory for us, that we should with the same Mind bear lighter Afflictions to prepare us for it? If this Principle be alive and active in our Breasts, that our present Afflictions shall determine*

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in our future Happineſs, when Time ſhall ceaſe and Eternity ſucceed; this will encourage us to ſerve God with our beſt affections when our days are overcaſt with Sorrow, as in a bright Proſperity: this will ſecure our paſſage through a ſtormy, tempeſtuous World, as if it were a truly Pacifick Sea, knowing that Divine Providence always guides us to the Port of eternal Tranquility. This is the ſubſtance of what is amplified in the following Treatiſe. And whilſt there are Miſeries in the World, no Diſcourſes are

more

more seasonable and useful than those that lighten our oppressing Sorrows, and that enable us with uniformity and constancy in all the changes of this mortal Life, to pursue our eminent End. The Holy Spirit, the great Comforter apply these Truths to the Hearts of the Afflicted.

William Bates.

Errata.

PAge 24. *l.* 1. *for* as objects are greater, *r.* appear greater. Page 116. *l.* 11. for their ſubtilty, *r.* ſtability. Page 120. *l.* 10. for now *Joſeph*, *r.* now that *Joſeph*.

THE GREAT DUTY OF Resignation:

Matth. 26. 39.

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me; Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

THE Words are our Saviour's Prayer at his private Passion in the Garden. In Paradise was the first Scene of *Man*'s Sin, and in a Garden the

first Scene of *Christ's Sorrows*.

He was now in the near view of his extream Sufferings; the fatal hour approach'd when he was to die with all the concurrent circumstances of Shame and Cruelty. His Nature was Humane and Holy, and therefore apprehensive of Misery and the Wrath of God. In this Exigency *He fell on his Face*, a posture of humble Reverence, and with earnestness prayed, saying, *O my Father*, an expression of his stedfast Trust in the Love of God: *If it be possible*, not with respect to his Absolute Power, for by that he could easily have preserved him; but with respect to his Sovereign Pleasure, and Eternal Decree: *Let this Cup pass from me*, that implies a compleat Deliverance from the rage of the

Powers

Powers of Darkneſs, and of the perverted World in conjunction with them. He ſuffered innocent Nature to act as Nature, for he ſubmitted to our Infirmities, but without our Imperfections. *Nevertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt*: His Petition was qualified with an Act of Submiſſion; the deſire of his Nature, that recoil'd from ſuch Sufferings, was overruled by the reſignation of *Grace*. There was no repugnancy, but a ſubordination between the Senſitive Will and the rational Will, directed by his Mind, that foreſaw the bleſſed effects of his Sufferings, *the Glory of God*, with the *Salvation of loſt Mankind*. And that juſt horror, with the ſtrong averſion of his Nature from ſuch a terrible Death, renders his willingneſs more conſpicuous and

meritorious. As *Man*, the apprehenſion of it put him into an *Agony*; but as *Mediatour*, by a firm reſolution and clear choice he ſubmitted to it.

Now, the example of our ſuffering Saviour, lays an obligation on us to tranſcribe his Copy; his Titles in Scripture declare both his *Eminency* and *Exemplarineſs*. He is our *Head*, and our *Leader*, the *Captain* of our Salvation, whom we are bound to follow in taking up our Croſs: His Sufferings were deſigned not only for our Redemption, but for our Inſtruction and Imitation. What he commands as God, he perform'd as Man, that we might voluntarily yield up our ſelves to the Holineſs and Equity of his Law. Thus from the patern of our Saviour's

viour's Deportment, the point of Doctrine is this:

The entire resignation of our Wills to the disposing Will of God, is the indispensible Duty of Christians under the sharpest Afflictions.

In the explication and proof of this Point, I shall

I. Consider what is consistent with this *Resignation.*

II. What is implied in it.

III. The Reasons to convince us of this Duty of *resigning* of our selves, and all our Interests to God; and then apply it.

I will, first, Consider what is consistent with this *voluntary* Re- I.

signation. That will appear in the following particulars.

1. First; an earnest deprecation of an impending Judgment, is reconcilable with our Submission to the pleasure of God, declared by the Event. Our Saviour with humility and importunity desired the removing of the Cup of Bitterness. We must distinguish between God's Law, and his Decree and Counsel; The Law is the Rule of our Duty, and requires an intire exact subjection in all our Faculties, even in our internal Desires, in the first motions of the Will; the least velleity, or rising of the Heart against the Divine Command, is irregular and culpable; for not only the acts of Sin are forbidden in every Command respectively, but all the incitations of Concupiscence, be-

before the deliberate judgment of the Mind, or the actual conſent of the Will. But the Decree of God is not the Rule of our Duty, and Secret, till manifeſted by the event of things. This being premiſed, the Reaſons are evident why we may pray againſt an Affliction that threatens us, without violating our Duty.

First; Becauſe Afflictions are Evils which the Will naturally declines, and are not deſirable things in themſelves. They are not beneficial and productive of our good by any proper efficacy and operation, but by the over-ruling Providence of God, and the gracious aſſiſtance of his Spirit. When *Aaron*'s Rod was put into the Sanctuary, and became green and flouriſhing with Bloſſoms and Almonds, 'twas not from any in-

herent vertue of its own, but from the ſpecial influence of the Divine Power; for the other Rods remained dead and dry: thus the happy effects of the Afflicting Rod are from Divine Grace.

Secondly; There are proper Temptations that attend the afflicted State. Many are encompaſs'd in a ſad Circle, their Sins procure Afflictions, and their Afflictions occaſion many Sins. Indeed, *Tribulation* that is ſanctified, by a happy gradation *worketh Patience*; and *Patience*, *Experience* of the Divine Mercy; and *Experience*, *Hope*, and *Hope maketh not aſhamed*. But when it meets with a ſtubborn Spirit, there are fearful deſcents of Sin: *Tribulation* excites *Impatience*, and *Impatience* cauſeth *Perplexity*, and that *Deſpair*, and *Deſpair Confuſion*. The Devil lays his

Rom. 5. 3, 4, 5.

his trains in every condition, and ſometimes by immoderate Sorrow, ſometimes by inordinate Joy, doth miſchief to the Soul. And as more periſh by Surfeits than Abſtinence, yet the Diſeaſes that are cauſed by emptineſs, are more dangerous and incurable than thoſe that proceed from fulneſs: So more are ruined by *Proſperity* than *Adverſity*: But the guilty Paſſions that ferment and rage in Adverſity, are more pernicious, and more hardly temper'd and ſubdued, than the Luxurious Appetites that are fomented and drawn forth by Proſperity. We are directed by our Saviour to pray, that we may *not be led into Temptation, and to be delivered from all Evil.*

Secondly; a mournful ſenſe of Afflictions ſent from God is 2.

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consistent with a dutiful resignation of our selves to his Will. 'Twas the vain boast of the Philosophers, that their Instructions would fortify Men with such magnanimous Principles, and generous Spirits, as with an equal calm tranquillity of Mind to encounter all the fierce and sorrowful Accidents to which they might be exposed here: They speak high against Fortune and Fate, and resolve stubbornly, that no misery, whether Poverty or Disgrace, Torments or Death, should extort from them a confession that it was Misery. 'Twas one of their Axioms, That a Wise Man is not subject to the vicissitudes and instability of things here below; That he suffers no conflict of contrary Passions in his Breast; that he is always

Nihil agis dolor, quamvis sis molestus, nunquam te esse confitebor malum. Possidomus.

ways above in the * Serene, where no Tempeſts can diſturb, no Eclipſe can darken his Mind: But theſe proud pretenſions were empty of reality. Indeed ſuch a perfect exemption from all afflicting Paſſions is neither poſſible nor regular in our preſent ſtate: not poſſible, for the beſt Men are not all Spirit, but united to Fleſh; and when the Body is under ſtrong pains, the Soul ſuffers in its ſufferings; and while we are thus compounded, the loſs of thoſe Comforts that ſupport and ſweeten the preſent Life, muſt cauſe Grief. 'Tis eaſy to utter brave Expreſſions, and lay down ſevere Precepts in contempt of Evils * when they are at a diſtance, but hard to ſuſtain

* *Talis eſt ſapientis animus qualis Mundi ſtatus ſuper lunam, ſemper illic ſerenum.* Seneca.

* *Magna verba excidunt, cum Mors proprius acceſſit, cum tortor manum popoſcit, poſſis illi dicere, facile provocabas mala abſentia.* Seneca.

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the Spirit under the actual feeling of them; 'tis one thing to discourse of a Battel, and another to be engaged in the heat of it. But supposing by a Philosophical Charm the Heart were so hardned as to be proof against the most piercing afflictions, such a forced insensibility is not regular, but proceeds from the extinction of Humanity and Piety, and that will appear by considering Afflictions in a natural or moral respect.

1. First, in a natural respect, for so they are destructive or oppressive Evils, and a pensive feeling of them is suitable to the Law of our Creation: for the Humane Nature is framed with such Senses and Passions, as according to God's intention should be affected suitably to the quality of their objects; and if the Soul acts rationally, 'tis moved

moved accordingly. A Saint on Earth is not a Saint in Heaven, raiſed above all Diſaſters and Troubles, freed from all hurtful impreſſions from without, and ſorrowful impreſſions within, but is liable to afflicting evils: And it is becoming his Duty to have his paſſions pliable to his condition, but without exceſs; the Eyes muſt not be drown'd, nor dry, but tenderly affected.

Secondly, Conſidered in a moral reſpect, as they are ſent from the high and juſt Providence of God, it is abſolutely neceſſary there ſhould be an humble reſentment of his Diſpleaſure. This is a conſequent of the former; for if our affections are ſeared up, that we do not feel the ſtroke, how ſhall we regard the hand that ſmites us? If we are

not

not ſenſible of Affliction, we are ſecure in our Sins. Natural Sorrow is introductive of Godly Sorrow. There are two extreams to be avoided by the afflicted, according to the direction of *Solomon* in the perſon of Wiſdom, and repeated by the Apoſtle: *My Son,* Heb. 12. 5. *deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.* Some are diſcouraged and over-born by Afflictions as inſupportable: others are ſtubborn and careleſs, and never lay them to heart: they never look upward to the original efficient Cauſe, an Offended God; nor inward to the impulſive deſerving Cauſe, their Sins; but eſteem them fortuitous Events that happen in this mutable ſtate, without a deſign to correct and reform Sinners; or to proceed from

from a blind neceſſity, things of courſe; or meerly regard the ſecond Cauſes and Inſtruments of their Troubles: accordingly, when they meet with Calamities, all their care is by a perverſe ſhift to ſeek for relief onely in Temporal Comforts; without ſerious applying themſelves to God, whoſe end in ſending Troubles, is to reclaim us from Sin to Holineſs, from Earth to Heaven, from the Creatures to himſelf.

This ſecret Atheiſm, like a benumming *Opium*, ſtupifies the Conſcience; and the inſenſibility of God's hand inflicting Evils, is as different from Chriſtian Patience and Conſtancy, as a mortal Lethargy is from the quiet, ſoft Sleep of Health: Nothing kindles his Anger more than neglecting it; 'tis equally provoking with the

the despising of his Love: It is a symptom of a wretched state of Soul; if there proceed no sighs and groans, no signs of grief from the sense of God's displeasure, it is a sad evidence there is no Spiritual Life. Indolence under the effects of God's Anger, is like the stilness of the Dead Sea, whose Calm is a Curse. The *Jews*, tho intitled the People of God, are deeply charg'd for this prodigious Madness; *O Lord, thou hast struck them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a Rock, they have refused to return.* Jer. 5. 3. We have whole Quarries of such obdurate Wretches amongst us; this impenitent disregard of God's hand is a dreadful presage of

of future and more heavy Judgments. *Who ever hardned himſelf againſt the Lord, and proſpered? Do we provoke the Lord to Jealouſy, are we ſtronger than he?* The moſt refractory Sinner he can compel to acknowledg with bitter lamentations his Wickedneſs, and weakneſs, how unable he is to contend with his Judge. But ſuppoſing a reſpite from Puniſhment here, there is an Hell prepared for ſtubborn Sinners, where is Weeping and Wailing for ever. Whom the Rods do not awaken, the Scorpions ſhall.

Secondly; I ſhall now proceed to explicate what is included in the reſignment of our ſelves to God in times of Affliction. This will be made evident by conſidering the leading powers and faculties

culties which Grace ſanctifies and works in, according to their natural ſubordination.

1. The Underſtanding approves the ſevereſt diſpenſations of Providence to be good, that is for reaſons though ſometimes unſearchable, yet always righteous, and for gracious ends to the Saints. When *Hezekiah* heard the heavy Prophecy, that all his Treaſures ſhould be carried to *Babylon*, and his Royal Progeny ſhould become Slaves there, he ſaid to *Iſaiah*, *Good is the Word of the Lord which thou haſt ſpoken.* His ſanctified Mind acknowledged it to be a juſt Correction of his vain Pride, and quietly ſubmitted to it: And as there is a ſatisfaction of Mind in the rectitude, ſo in the graciouſneſs of his Proceedings. The miſapprehenſion and miſ-

Iſa. 39. 6, 7, 8.

mis-belief of God's design in afflicting, causeth Impatience and Murmuring; but when the Mind is convinced, that he afflicts us for our Benefit, that Bodily Diseases are Medicinal Advantages, the remedies of the Soul; that the losses of Earthly Comforts prepare us for Divine Enjoyments; that the way which is sowed with Thorns, and watered with Tears, leads to Heaven; the Heart is compliant with the sharpest methods of Providence. But these things will be more fully opened under the several heads of Arguments to enforce the Duty.

2. This Resignment principally consists in the consent and subjection of the Will to the Orders of Heaven. The Will is an imperious Faculty, naturally impatient of opposition to its Desires, and

we pay the higheſt honour to God in the loweſt ſubmiſſion of our Wills to his Appointments. 'Tis true the Will cannot make a direct choice of Evil, nor love Afflictions, but the Holy Spirit by a powerful Operation ſo diſpoſeth it, as to renounce its own inclinations when diſcordant with the Will of God. And the more humble, ready and entire the Submiſſion is, the more difficult and harſh the denial of our natural deſire is, the more ſupernatural Grace ſhines and is acceptable. It is the perfection of Holineſs to do what God loves, and to love what God does. There is a rare example of this in *David*'s carriage, when under his greateſt Affliction: 'twas in his flight from his Son *Abſalom*, who endeavoured to deprive him of his

his Kingdom and Life. *And the King ſaid unto* Zadock *the Prieſt, Carry back the Ark of God into the City: if I ſhall find favour in his eyes, he will bring me again, and ſhew me both it and his Habitation; but if he ſhall ſay, I have no delight in thee, behold, here I am, let him do to me as ſeems good unto him.* O happy frame! his Spirit was ſo equally ballanced, That if God would ſuffer a Rebel that violated the moſt tender and ſtrict relations of a Son and Subject to a Gracious Father and Sovereign, the Murtherer of his Brother, and a Parricide in his deſires, to uſurp his Throne, he humbly ſubmitted to it. 2 Sam. 15. 25.

3. The Duty of Reſignation conſiſts in the compoſure of the Affections to a juſt meaſure and temper, when under the ſharpeſt

Diſcipline. Of the Paſſions, ſome are tender and melting, others are fierce and ſtormy, and if a ponderous oppreſſing Evil happen, or the loſs of that good that was very pleaſing, they ſometimes join together, as the Clouds at the ſame time diſſolve in Showers, and break forth in Thunder and Lightning. Now when ſanctified Reaſon hath a due Empire over them, and the Soul poſſeſſeth it ſelf in Patience, it is a happy effect of Reſignation to the Divine diſpoſal. Of this we have an eminent inſtance in the afflicted Saint forementioned. When *David* was ſo wickedly reproached by *Shimei*, and *Abiſhai* fired with Indignation, would preſently have taken exemplary revenge, by ſtopping his Breath for ever: *Should this dead Dog Curſe*

Curſe my Lord the King? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his Head. How cool and calm was *David's* Spirit? he felt no æſtuations nor tumults within, expreſt no outragious complaints, but ſaid, *Let him Curſe, becauſe the Lord hath ſaid to him, Curſe* David. There is a twofold exceſs of the Sorrowful Affections in Troubles: 2 Sam. 16.9.10.

I. In the degrees of them.
II. In the continuance.

Firſt; In the degrees of them, when they exceed their cauſes. Afflictive things that deeply wound us, are uſually repreſented by the reflection of Sorrow, with all the heightning Circumſtances, the Loſs as unvaluable, the Evil as intollerable,

As objects appear greater than their true proportion when ſeen through a Miſt; ſo do Evils, apprehended through Grief: and after ſuch a falſe judgment the Paſſions take their violent courſe, and the Spirit ſinks under overwhelming heavineſs. The Soul is diſabled from performing what belongs to it, with reſpect to the general and particular Calling, and cannot with freedom wait upon God, but neglects its duty and felicity. 'Twas the complaint of the afflicted Poet,

Hei mihi quod miſeros prudentia prima relinquit.

The firſt effect of miſery is black confuſion in the thoughts, that the Mind doth not diſtinctly conſider, and apply ſuch things as would

would be effectual to mitigate, or remove it. Beſides, as when the Stream overflows the Channel, it runs foul and turbid: ſo immoderate Sorrow often cauſeth ſecret Diſcontent and Anger at the Almighty, diſquieting and tormenting riſings of heart againſt his Providence. All things are diſordered and turbulent in the little and marvelous Monarchy of the Soul. And ſuch ſeeds of incitation are in our corrupt Nature, that in the extremity of Anguiſh, the furious Paſſions ſwell into a Storm, and break the reſtraints of Reaſon and Grace. *Job* in a hot fit expoſtulates ſtrangely with God, *Is it good unto thee that thou ſhouldeſt oppreſs?* He was a Holy Man, and a Prophet, who in the Paroxiſm of his Paſſion *curſt the day of his Birth.* Job 10. 3. Jer. 20. 14.

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Secondly; There is an Exceſs in the continuance.

Deep Grief doth more arreſt the Thoughts upon its object, than the Affection of Joy doth. The Mind is not ſo eaſily diverted from what afflicts, as from what delights. The main ſtrain of the Soul is towards the mournful Object; and in the midſt of Comforts to ſupport the fainting Spirits, there ſtill remains a ſad remembrance of that which torments: a ſwarm of ſtinging thoughts continually wound and inflame the Breaſt: no Counſels prevail, but the Soul is reſolved in its grief, and always reſtleſs with a bitter deſire of what is irrecoverable. Thus the Prophet deſcribes the miſery of *Rachel, weeping for her Children, and would not be comforted, becauſe they were not.*

Jer. 31. 15.

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As ſome Venomous Creatures turn all that they eat into Poiſon: ſo obſtinate Sorrow takes occaſion from every thing to encreaſe it ſelf. This conſumes the ſtrength, and the Mourner lives only to feel his Miſery, and thinks Death too ſlow for him, that was ſo precipitate for the perſon lamented. Thus by the fixed contemplation of its Trouble, the Soul is diſtracted from its heavenly Original, and from purſuing its bleſſed End, and indulgeth its Sorrow, as if the loſs of a Temporal Comfort were utterly undoing to it. This obſtinate grief is inconſiſtent with a reſigned frame of Spirit. Though in great Afflictions, there will be a conflict of Nature, and it is Wiſdom to let Grief breath forth, and have a paſſage, yet Grace will aſ-

aſſwage the Fury, and limit the time, by regarding the Will of God, and by deriving from the Springs of Comfort above ſome inward refreſhings, when the Streams below totally fail.

I ſhall now propound the Arguments that will clearly convince us of this Duty of Reſignation; ſome of which are powerful to ſilence all rebellious Arguings, and ſuppreſs all the tranſports of the Paſſions; others to raiſe the drooping Spirits, and incline the Heart to a calm yielding, and compleat ſubjection to the Divine Will.

The firſt Argument ariſeth from God's Original Supream Right in our Perſons, and all things we enjoy. He is the Fountain of Being, and produced us out of

the depth of our native nothing, and made us little lower than the Angels. He is the Author of all our Good, the juſt and true Proprietor of all his Benefits. From hence reſults his Sovereignty and Dominion over us, which is declared in his Law, and the diſpenſations of his Providence. His Law is the Rule of our Lives and Actions, his Governing Providence the Rule of our Sufferings and Paſſions. There is indiſpenſibly due, a free and full Obedience to his Commands, and an intire univerſal Reſignation to the Orders of his Providence. The enjoyment of all our Bleſſings is from his pure Goodneſs, and rich Bounty, which requires our humble and affectionate Thankfulneſs; and his reſumption of them ſhould be entertained with

a Holy and a Patient Submiſſion. He gives them freely, and may recall them at his Pleaſure. In whatſoever inſtance his Will is declared, we muſt with Humility and Meekneſs ſubmit; for he hath an equal Empire in diſpoſing all things that are equally his own, and we are bound by an equal Obedience to acknowledg his Dominion. When *Eli* received the terrible meſſage of the ruine of his Family; the final exciſion of it from the dignity of the Prieſthood, he patiently ſubmits: *It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good.* The meer deſire of exemption from his over-ruling Will, is a heinous Sin, and a ſtubborn uncompliance with it in the iſſues of things, is direct Rebellion, mixt with ingratitude, obſtructive to

1 Sam. 3. 17.

our

our preſent Peace, and future Happineſs. If the Afflicted would for a while ſuſpend their Tears and Sighs, and with free Reaſon conſider, that what relation ſoever they had in their deareſt Loſs, whether of a Father, a Son, of a Husband or Wife, or any other amiable and paſſionate terms, yet God hath a nearer right and juſter claim in thoſe Perſons, being his by the beſt Titles of Creation and Redemption, it would ſilence murmurings and impatience, and ſtop the ſcope of inordinate Sorrow. Our Propriety in them was derived from his Favour, and our Poſſeſſion was depending on his Will, for his Right in all his Creatures is unalienable. This conſideration was the foundation of *Job's* Patience;

ence; when he was ſtript of all his outward Comforts, how compoſed was he in his Mind! how conſiderate in his words! he reflects upon his Native Poverty,

Job 1.21. *Naked came I into the World, and naked ſhall I return thither*, and Adores God's Dominion: *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken, bleſſed be his Name.* Add farther, that which by immediate connection follows, the conſideration of the glorious Majeſty of God, and our natural meanneſs and unworthineſs. The diſtance and diſproportion is ſo vaſt between him and us, that we are not able to conceive the full and juſt Idea of his Excellent Greatneſs: We are fain to aſſiſt our Minds in the Thoughts of God by ſenſible repreſentations; and

and to expreſs our Conceptions by borrowed terms; His Immenſity by the Ocean; his Eternity, by the returning of a Circle into it ſelf; his Power, by Thunder; his Majeſty by the Sun in its Meridian ſplendours. As the flying Fiſhes, (Shoals of which are met in ſailing to the *Indies*,) can fly no longer than their Wings remain moiſt; when thoſe Membranes are dry, they cannot move, and are forc'd to dip themſelves again in the Sea, that by ſoftening them, they may renew their Flight: Thus when we aſcend in our Minds to God, we form no Conceptions but what take their riſe from ſenſible things, which infinitely fall ſhort of his Perfections. Who can fully underſtand the tranſcendent Excellencies of his Nature? Who can deſcribe

St. *Hilary* declares of himself, *Non sibi relictum quicquam aliud a natura sua intelligere, in quo majus officium præstare conditori suo posset quam ut tantum eum esse intelligeret, quantus & intelligi non potest & potest credi.* de Trin. lib. 1.

what is ineffable, and most worthy to be ador'd with silent admiration and extasy of Mind? *He dwells in that Light which is inaccessible*; the Angels, the most comprehensive Spirits, *vail their faces in the presence of his Glory.* He is his own Original, but without Beginning; alone, but not solitary; one ever Blessed God, yet communicates his intire Deity to the Son and Spirit; he is not divided in number, not confused in Unity. He is not compell'd by Necessity, nor chang'd by Liberty, nor measur'd by Time: If we ascend to the first Fountains of all Ages, then his Infinite Understanding comprehended in one clear view, the whole compass, extent and duration of all things. His powerful Word made the visible and invisible World, and upholds them.

them. That which was ſpoken with Flattery, of a *Roman* Emperour, by *Seneca*, (who as much degenerated from the dignity of a Stoical Philoſopher, in licking *Nero*, as in biting *Alexander*) is abſolutely true of the Sovereign Lord of the World: His Providence is the Band that unites the parts of the Univerſal Common-Wealth, the Vital Spirit and Vertue that ſuſtains all: Without his Eye and Hand, his diſpoſitive Wiſdom and Power, the whole frame would disband, and fall into Confuſion and Ruine. He is ſeated upon the Throne of the Univerſe. *Thouſand thouſands of glorious Spirits miniſter unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtand before him*, in the quality and humility of his Servants, ready to execute his Commands. He is the

Ille eſt vinculum per quod res publica cohæret: Ille ſpiritus vitalis, quem tot millia trahunt: nihil ipſa futura niſi onus & præda ſi mens illa Imperii ſub trahatur lib. de Clem.

Judg of the Living and the Dead, that disposeth of Heaven and Hell for Ever. And what is Man? a little Breathing Dust. He is infinitely above us, and so strangely condescends, in having a tender care of us, that the Psalmist was swallowed up in Extasy and Amazement at the thoughts of it: *Lord, What is Man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of Man that thou regardest him?* Nay, we are beneath his Anger, as a Worm is not worthy of the indignation of an Angel. Now the more we magnify God, and exalt his Authority in our Judgments, the more our Wills are prepared to yield to him: *His Excellency will make us afraid to oppose his Providence.* When the Son of God appeared to *Saul*, in his Glory, and commanded in

Psal. 8.

person,

Perſon, he preſently lets fall his Arms of Defiance; and ſays, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* His Reſignation was abſolute; nothing was ſo hard to do, nothing ſo formidable to ſuffer, but he was ready to accompliſh and endure in obedience to Chriſt. The more we debaſe and vilify our ſelves, the more eaſy it will be to bear what God inflicts; Humility diſpoſeth to Submiſſion. Our Paſſions are not excited at the breaking of an ordinary Glaſs; but if a Veſſel of Chriſtal be broken, it moves us: the lower eſteem we have of our ſelves, the leſs we ſhall be tranſported for any breach that is made upon us. We read in the Hiſtory of *Job*, many heavy Complaints uttered by him of his Sufferings, all the ſad Figures of paſſionate Elo- Act. 9. 6.

quence made use of to represent them, and the fruitless Essays of his Friends, that did rather exasperate than appease his Spirit: And it is very observable, that when the Lord interposed himself to justify the ways of his Providence, he did not charge upon him the guilt of his Sins that deserved the severest Judgments, but appears in his Glory, and reminds him of his original nothing.

Job 38.4 *Where wast thou when I laid the Foundations of the Earth? declare, if thou hast Understanding.* He opens to him some of the Excellencies of the Deity in the works of Creation and Providence, and the present effect was, *Job* adored with humble Reverence the Divine Majesty, and acknowledged his own unworthiness. *Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will*

will lay my hand upon my mouth; now mine eyes ſee thee, I abhor my ſelf, and repent in Duſt and Aſhes. The thickeſt ſmoak by aſcending diſſipates and vaniſhes. If the troubled Soul did aſcend to Heaven, and conſider that even the worſt Evils are either from the operation or permiſſion of the Divine Providence, the Cloudy diſturbing Thoughts and Paſſions would be preſently ſcattered. *David* had a bleſſed experiment of this in his diſtreſs: *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, becauſe thou didſt it.* Such an awful apprehenſion he had of God, as tranſcendently ſuperiour to him, and unaccountable for his Proceedings. When any impatient Thoughts ariſe, we ſhould preſently chain them up, for there is Folly and Fury in them; What am I, that my ſul-

Pſal. 39. 8.

len Spirit ſhould diſpute againſt the Orders of Heaven? that my Paſſions ſhould reſiſt the Will of of the higheſt Lord? that my Deſires ſhould depoſe him from his Throne? For thus by implication and conſequence they do, who are vex'd at his Providence. A Holy Soul will tremble at the Thoughts of it. Methinks God ſpeaks to the afflicted and diſturbed Soul, in the words of the Pſalm, *Be ſtill, and know that I am God.* The actual conſideration of his Supremacy will be powerful to lay the growing Storm of Paſſions. Impatience ariſeth from the ignorance of God and our ſelves.

Secondly; The Righteouſneſs of God in all his ways, if duely conſidered, will compoſe the Afflicted Spirit to quiet and humble

humble ſubmiſſion. He is never injurious to us when he deprives us of our ſweeteſt and moſt precious comforts, becauſe we have incurred the forfeiture of all. He is not cruel in laying the heavieſt puniſhments upon us, for we deſerve them. If we were free from actual Sins, yet our depraved nature, ſo repugnant to the pure Law of God, involves us under an Obligation to Puniſhment. If we had not been attainted with the guilt of Original Sin, yet the Sins committed in the courſe of our Lives, make us deeply obnoxious to Divine Juſtice: How much more the concurrent guilt of Original and Actual Sins? The acts of Sin are tranſient and paſs away; but the guilt and ſtain of Sin, and the Conſcience of Sin remain, and no leſs than Eternal

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Puniſhment is commenſurate to the obliquity. From hence there is the cleareſt Reaſon to juſtify God in all his Proceedings. *Righteouſneſs eſtabliſhes his Throne.* The Prophet ſaith, *Thy Righteouſneſs is like the great Mountains, thy Judgments are a great Deep.* The ſpecial ends of God in ſevere diſpenſations, are ſometimes indiſcernible, but never unjuſt; his Righteouſneſs is obvious to every eye. The actual conſideration of this is powerful to ſilence the uproar of the Paſſions, and to make us lie humbly at his Feet under the ſoreſt Chaſtiſements. *I will bear the Indignation of the Lord* (without murmuring, ſaith the Afflicted Church) *becauſe I have ſinned againſt him.* As diſobedience in our Inclinations and Actions, is a tacit reflection upon the equity of his Law,

Pſal. 36. 6.

Mic. 7. 9.

Law, as if the reſtraints of it were unreaſonable; ſo Impatience and fretful Diſcontent is upon the equity of his Providence, as if the afflicting diſpenſations of it were not due to us: And the ſenſe of our Sinfulneſs, and God's Righteouſneſs, is an excellent preventive of it. If thou art in great Afflictions, and feeleſt any tumultuous Thoughts, any rebellious Riſings within thee, Conſider thou art a Sinner, guilty of ten Thouſand Provocations, and dareſt thou appear before his inlightned and terrible Tribunal, and challenge him for any unrighteous Proceedings? *Wherefore doth a living Man complain, a Man for the puniſhment of his Sins? Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I will not offend any more. That which I know not, teach thou me;* Lam. 3. 39. Job 34. 31, 32.

me; and if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more. Besides, all the Punishments of Men here, are with Merciful allays, not in just proportion to their Guilt. The Church in its calamitous State, described in the most doleful Lamentations of *Jeremiah*, when the greatest number of the *Jews* perished by the Sword, or Famine that attended the War, their City and Temple were laid in Ruines, and the unhappy People that escaped the fury of the *Chaldeans*, were the Captives and Triumphs of their Enemies; yet in that unparallell'd Affliction she acknowledges, *It is the Lord's Mercies that we are not* utterly and totally *consumed*, and lays her Mouth in the Dust, a posture of the lowest abasement. And Holy *Ezra* reflecting upon that dreadful Calamity,

Lam. 3. 22.

mity, acknowledgeth their Puniſhment was beneath their deſert, as their Deliverance was above their expectation: *And for all that is come upon us for our evil deeds and great treſpaſſes, ſeeing thou haſt puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and given us ſuch a deliverance as this.* Our Deſerts are leſs than the leaſt of God's Mercies, and our Offences greater than the greateſt of his Judgments. This ſhould make us not onely patiently ſubmit, *but humbly accept the puniſhment of our iniquity, as far leſs than what is deſerved.* If the Sentence of Death againſt a Malefactor be exchanged for Baniſhment, or Baniſhment be remitted for a ſhort Confinement, is there not incomparable more cauſe to be thankful for what is pardoned, than to complain for what

Ezra 9. 13.

Levit. 26. 41.

what is ſuffered? What Ingratitude is it to be impatient and murmuring for theſe *light Afflictions that are but for a moment*, when we deſerve an eternal and inſupportable weight of Miſery in Hell? It is infinitely more becoming us and ſafe, to argue againſt our irregular Paſſions, than to tax his Righteous Diſpenſations.

Thirdly; His Power is Immenſe and uncontrollable, and it is a vain attempt to contend with him, as if the Eternal Order of his Decrees could be altered or broken. The Conteſt between God and the Sinner, is whoſe Will ſhall ſtand. It is his glorious work to depreſs the Proud, and ſubdue the ſtubborn refractory Spirits. The Puniſhment of the firſt Pride in the Angels, is an

an Eternal and terrible example of his powerful Juſtice; and how intolerable a Crime it is, that Heaven could not bear, but preſently opened, and the Guilty fell into the bottomleſs Pit. Now Pride is a ſeminal Evil, and lies at the root of Stubborneſs, and impatience under Judgments. Proud Duſt is apt to fly in God's Face upon every motion of the Afflicting Paſſions. And by the reſiſtance of Self-Will he is provoked to more Severity. *Wo be to him that ſtrives with his Maker.* Iſa. 45. 9. This is to be like a reſtive Horſe or Mule, without Underſtanding, that flings and foams when the Burthen is laid upon him, but gets nothing but Blows, without the removal of the Burthen. It is our Duty and Intereſt to obſerve the Bleſſed Apoſtles direction.

1 Pet. 5. 6. on: *Humble your ſelves under the mighty hand of God, and he ſhall exalt you.* There is a paſſive humbling by his irreſiſtible Providence, and an active voluntary humbling, which implies a ſubjection to his Law, and a ſubmiſſion to his Providence: This is infinitely pleaſing to him, 'tis the right diſpoſition that prepares us for Mercy, and is the certain way of Exaltation; for then God obtains his End. The humble Proſtrating our ſelves at his Feet to receive his Correction, cauſes his Bowels to relent, and ſtops his Hand: the ſeeming humiliation of *Ahab* procured a reſpite of thoſe fearful Judgments denounced againſt his Houſe. It is ſaid of the generoſity of the Lion, that he ſpares his proſtrate Adverſary. In ſhort, our Salvation

tion depends upon our humble demeanour under afflictive Diſpenſations. *We have had Fathers of our Fleſh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence, ſhall we not much more be in ſubjection to the Father of Spirits, and live?* Unſubmiſſion induces a deadly guilt upon the Rebellious. Heb. 12. 9.

Fourthly; His Paternal Love in ſending Afflictions is a ſufficient Argument to win our compliance with his Will. The bleſſed Apoſtle applying Lenitives to the Afflicted, propounds two Divine Truths, that if ſeriouſly thought of, and ſtedfaſtly believed, are powerful to mitigate the acerbity of all Sufferings, and ſupport the Spirit in the greateſt Agony. The firſt is, *God ſcourgeth every Son whom he receiveth*; And the other that is Heb. 12. 6.

joined with it is, *Whom the Lord loves he chasteneth.*

The Rule is general,

First; All his Sons are under the Discipline of the Rod: and who would be so unhappy as to be exempted from that number for all the prosperity of the World? Afflictions sanctified, are the conspicuous Seal of their Adoption, and Title to Heaven. And who would forfeit the honour of that Adoption, and lose the benefit annext to it, the eternal Inheritance, rather than patiently beat his Fatherly Chastisements? Others that enjoy a perpetual Spring of Pleasure here, are declared Bastards and not Sons: they are indeed within the compass of his Universal Providence, but not of that peculiar care

care that belongs to his Sacred and Select Progeny. His Corrections are an Argument of his Authority as our Father, and an assurance that we are his Children: this should induce us not only with submiss temper of Soul, but with thankfulness to receive the sharpest Correction from the hands of our Heavenly Father. This was the reason of our Saviour's meek yielding himself to the violence and cruelty of his Enemies. *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

Secondly; Chastisement is the effect of his Paternal Love: He is the Father of our Spirits, and that Divine Relation carries with it a special Love to the Spirits of Men, and in that degree of Eminence, as to secure and advance

their happineſs, though to the deſtruction of the Fleſh. The Soul is of incomparable more worth than the Body, as the bright Oriental Pearl than the mean Shell that contains it: this God moſt highly values, for this he gave ſo great a Price, and on it draws his Image. If Temporal Proſperity were for our beſt advantage, how willingly would God beſtow it on us? *He that ſpared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* Which words among all that the Holy Ghoſt hath dictated to the Interpreters of God's Heart to his People, are moſt expreſſive of his love and Bounty, and moſt for their comfort. He that gives Grace and Glory, the moſt real teſtimonies of his Love, certainly withholds

Rom. 8. 32.

no

no good thing from them. I ſhall produce one convincing inſtance of this. St. *Paul*, who by an incomparable Priviledg was rapt up to the Cœleſtial Paradiſe, and heard ineffable things, yet was tormented by the Angel of Satan, and his earneſt repeated Prayer for deliverance, not preſently granted. Did not God love that bleſſed Apoſtle, whoſe internal Love to Chriſt almoſt equall'd the Seraphims, thoſe pure everlaſting Flames, and was expreſſed in the invariable tenour of his Life, by ſuch miraculous Actions and Sufferings for the propagating and defence of the Faith of Chriſt, and the Glory of his Name? *If we love him becauſe he firſt loved us*, as St. *John* teſtifies, certainly he that returned ſuch a ſuperlative Affection to Chriſt, received the great-

eſt Love from him. Now, if Chriſt did love *Paul*, why did he not upon his earneſt repeated Prayer, deliver him from his wounding Trouble, whatſoever it was? That Permiſſion was a demonſtration of the Love of Chriſt to him, as it is acknowledged by himſelf; *Leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure through the abundance of Revelation, there was given to me a Thorn in the Fleſh, and the Meſſenger of Satan to buffet me.* That the Afflictions of the Saints proceed from God's Love, will be evident, by conſidering,

2 Cor. 12. 7.

I. His gracious Deſign in ſending them.

II. His compaſſionate Providence over them, and his aſſiſting Power afforded to his People in their Troubles.

III. The

III. The happy issue out of them.

First; His gracious Design in sending them. *God doth not afflict willingly, but if need be, not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his Holiness.* The expression is high and emphatical, *his Holiness*, the brightest Glory of his Nature, the divinest Gift of his Love. Heb. 12. 10.

The two principal parts of Holiness, are, ceasing from doing Evil, and learning to do well. And Afflictions are ordained and sent as profitable for both these effects.

1. For the prevention or cure of Sin, which is an evil incomparably worse in its nature, and terrible consequents in this and

the next World, than all meer afflicting temporal Evils. Sin defiles and debaseth the Soul, which is the proper excellency of Man, and separates from God our supream Good. *Your Sins have separated between you and your God, and have hid his face from you.* Isa. 59. 2. All Afflictions that can befall us here in our persons or concernments, the most disgraceful Accidents, the most reproachful contumelious Slanders, the most loathsom contagious Diseases, that cause our dearest Friends to withdraw from us, yet cannot deprive us of Union with God by Faith and Love, nor of the fruition of his propitious Presence. *Lazarus* when covered with Ulcers, was kissed with the Kisses of his Mouth: But Sin hath this pernicious effect, it separates from his

his gracious Preſence here, and, if continued in without Repentance, will exclude from his Glorious Preſence for ever. Now Afflictions are Medicinal Applications for the cure of Sin, the Diſeaſe and Death of the Soul, and therefore infinitely worſe than the ſharpeſt Remedies.

The beginnings and progreſs of Converſion to God, are uſually by ſanctified Afflictions. Indeed, conſidering our folly, and perverſe abuſe of his Bleſſings, they are the moſt congruous means for our Recovery. The Light of God's Law doth not ſo powerfully convince us of the Evil of Sin till felt in the effects of it. *Thy own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee, and thy backſlidings ſhall reprove thee; know therefore and ſee that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou haſt forſaken* Jer. 2. 19.

ken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. The Inſtructions of the Rod, are more ſenſible than of the Word; as the feeling of a tormenting Diſeaſe, produceth another kind of underſtanding of it than the reading of its nature in Books of Phyſick: and they make us more attentive to God's Call, and leave a deeper impreſſion upon us. It is *Elihu* his obſervation, *If Sinners be bound in Fetters, and held in Cords, then he ſhews them their works, and their tranſgreſſions, that they have exceeded.* Affliction clarifies their Sight, makes Sin to be as heinous in the view of Conſcience, as in its own foul nature. It follows, *He openeth alſo the Ear to Diſcipline, and commandeth that they return from their iniquity.* Gentle Methods

Job 36. 8, 9.

Ver. 10.

were

were lost upon them, but by Judgments he effectually commands, they relent and return to their Duty. And after Conversion we need their Discipline, to make us more circumspect and obedient. The Psalmist declares, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* For before he was afflicted he went astray; He was reduced from the errour of his ways by his Troubles: And 'twas his experimental observation, *I know in faithfulness* (from the constancy of Love) *thou hast afflicted me.* Nothing so cools our Zeal to Eternal things, as the Love of the World. Vital heat declines and languishes, as the Feaverish heat is inflamed; and till we feel the vexations, we are allured by the vanities of the World: therefore God is pleased by such bitter Psal. 119

means

means to make us more Holy and Heavenly. Sometimes he removes with Jealousy those objects to which our hearts are so intirely engaged, that the enjoyment of them intercepts the ascending of our Affections to himself. Besides, he will not suffer us to perish in Prosperity. *We are chastened of the Lord for our amendment, that we may not be condemned with the unreformed World.* And is not this an infallible testimony of his Love? *David* said, *Let the Righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent Oil.* If he valued the Reprehensions that were not contumelious and injurious, not to upbraid but reform him, as a favour and dear obligation, how much more should we the corrections of our Heavenly

1 Cor. 11.

Psa. 141. 5.

venly Father? And it will be a greater incitement to an humble and grateful acceptance of this Diſcipline; if we conſider what a ſevere neglect it is, when God ſuffers the Wicked to lead a Voluptuous Life without diſturbance: They are encircled with Riches and Honours, ſoftned with Pleaſures, charmed with inticing objects, and thus become hardned in Sin: they are Riotous and Luxurious, and give the Reins to their corrupt, unruly Appetites without controll; the Slaves of Senſe, led onely by Principles of Pleaſure, and hereby are inexcuſable, and made ripe for Perdition, and reſerved for final Vengeance. Others, though not guilty of ſcandalous enormities, yet are by continual Proſperity, ſetled upon their Lees, careleſs and ſecure,

cure, *neglect the great Salvation*, and say in their hearts, *It is good to be here*; and their Damnation is as certain, though not so visible, as of those who commit gross and open Wickedness. Sad Preterition! In the midst of Pleasures they are truly miserable. They have just reason to be abandoned to Sorrow, being forsaken of the Love of God. The Bramble is not cut, when the Vine is pruned till it bleeds in order to its fruitfulness: this letting them alone to take their fill of Pleasures, is a heavy presage of final ruine. When the Patient is desperate, the Physician lays no restraint upon the Diseased Appetite, but permits him to take what he craves.

Heb. 4. 14.

Besides, the Intention of God is by Affliction to exercise and illustrate their Graces. The most ex-

excellent Christian Vertues would be comparatively of little use without hard Trials. Unfeigned Faith in the Truth and Power of God to accomplish his Promises, Sincere Love to him, humble Self-denial, Persevering Patience then appear in their radiancy and vigour. What a blessed advantage is it, by the loss of Temporal Comforts to encrease in the Graces of the Spirit? they are the truest Riches, the fullest Joy, and the highest honour of a Christian. St. *Peter* declares, *the trial of our Faith is much more precious than of Gold that perisheth*; 'tis refined and resplendent by the fire of Affliction, and *will be found unto Praise, and Honour, and Glory, at the appearing of Christ.* It is the advice of St. *James*, *Count* 1 Pet. 1. 7.

it

Jam. 1. 2, 3. *it all Joy when ye fall into divers Temptations. Knowing this, that the trial of your Faith worketh Patience:* Though Afflictions simply considered, may be very grievous, yet if we advisedly weigh, and rightly compare things, even when our sorrowful Passions are moved, our Judgments will esteem them matter of Joy, not onely in expectation of Future Happiness, but as Divine Grace is thereby drawn forth in the most noble Operations. In short, the ultimate design of God in afflicting his People, is thereby to bring them to Heaven. Affliction mortifies the Lusts of the Flesh, purifies the Spirit, *and makes us fit for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* By persevering Patience in Sufferings, they are approved of God, and obtain a Right and Title to the

the Kingdom of Glory. For according to the tenor of the Covenant of Grace, Heaven ſhall be conferred as a reward to thoſe that overcome. If there be no Enemy, there will be no Fight; and if no Fight, no Victory; if no Victory, no Triumph; only thoſe who Conquer are Crowned. Rev. 22.

The beloved Diſciple, with his Brother, though allied to our Saviour by Conſanguinity, who expected by ſpecial favour to be glorified without a preparatory Trial, yet he tells them, *without drinking of his Cup, they could not have a ſhare in his Kingdom*, and this ſhould reconcile our Spirits to all our Troubles: for the Apoſtle declares, who was a competent Judg, having been throughly

acquainted with Griefs, and had a Proſpect into the Glorious Kingdom, *I reckon that the Sufferings of*
Rom. 8. *this preſent Life, are not worthy to be compared to the Glory that ſhall be revealed in us.*

2. God's Love is diſcovered in his compaſſionate Providence over them, and aſſiſting Power afforded to them in their Afflictions: He ſpeaks to the afflicted
Heb. 12. 5. and diſconſolate, *My Son, deſpiſe not thou the Chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him*: To ſweeten by that tender expreſſion, the rigour of his Diſcipline; to ſignify his dear ſympathy with their Anguiſh and Sufferings.

Heavenly Conſolation! God himſelf bears a ſhare in their Sorrows, *is afflicted in their Afflictions*: And the effect of this Love

Love is, that he always tempers and moderates their Trials, to their Strength; or increases their Strength in proportion to the Trial. His Corrections are deliberate Dispensations, that proceed from Judgment, not from Fury, which the Prophet earnestly deprecates. His Rods are bound up with Mercy, his Faithfulness joins with his Affection, in moderating their Sufferings. It is one Clause of the Covenant of Grace, made with Christ, typified by *David*, *If his Children break my Statutes, and keep not my Commandments, then will I visit their transgression with a Rod, to amend, not to destroy them; but my loving kindness I will not take away from them, nor suffer my Faithfulness to fail.* The Apostle assures Believers, *That God is faithful, who will*

Jer. 8.

Psal. 89. 31, 32, 33.

1 Cor. 10. 13. *not ſuffer them to be tempted above what they are able, but will with the Temptation make a way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it.* Our Redeemer in his Agony was relieved by Heavenly Succour, the preſence of an Angel with a meſſage of Comfort: St. *Paul* found it verified by his own Experience, *That as the Sufferings of Chriſt abounded in him, ſo his Conſolations abounded by Chriſt, and the Divine Power was accompliſhed, illuſtriouſly appeared in ſupporting his weakneſs.* How many have enjoyed Comforts of a more precious nature, and more abundant, in want of Supplies from the World, than in the poſſeſſion of them? When there is a total Eclipſe below, the bleſſed Comforter deſcends with Light, and fills

2 Cor. 1. 5.

2 Cor. 12. 9.

fills the Soul with Joy, in Believing.

The Hiſtorian tells us of a * clear Vein of Water, that ſprings from *Mongibel*, (that great Furnace, that always ſends forth Smoak or Flames,) yet is ſo cool, as if it diſtilled from a Snowy Mountain: thus the Saints in the Fiery Trial, have been often refreſhed with Divine Comforts, and ſuch humble Submiſſions, and gracious Thanksgivings have proceeded from their Lips, as have been very comfortable to thoſe about them.

* *Acin quamvis de miſſum Etna nullus frigore ante vertit.* Solin

Thirdly; The Iſſue out of all is the moſt ſenſible declaration of God's Love to them. The continuance is limited by his tender Love, till they are prepared for Mercy. The Proſperity of the Wicked is Wine in

the beginning, and Lees at the bottom; but the worſt and afflicted ſtate of the Saints is firſt, and will at length certainly end in Felicity. In the Tragedy of *Job*, the Devil was the Author, *Chaldeans* and *Sabæans* were the Actors, *but the end was from the Lord.* We are inſtructed by the Apoſtle, *That although no Chaſtiſement for the preſent ſeems to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheleſs, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs, unto them that are exerciſed thereby.* It is an alluſion to the Rewards in the *Olympick* Games, when the perſons that overcame in thoſe Exerciſes, were crowned with Wreaths of Olive Leaves, the Emblem of Peace. Thus Chriſtians who with unfainting perſeverance in their Duty, ſuffer Affliction, ſhall be rewarded

Heb. 12. 11.

warded with Holineſs in conjunction with Peace. This peaceable fruit of Righteouſneſs is not the natural product of Affliction: Grapes do not ſpring from Thorns, nor Figs from Thiſtles; neither can it be ſo properly aſcribed to the afflicted perſon, as to the powerful Vertue and ſpecial Grace of the Holy Spirit, who ſanctifies Afflictions, and makes them profitable for effecting God's intention by them. And when the afflicted perſon becomes more humble, more holy, more weaned from the World, more reſigned to the Will of God, *this Fruit unto Holineſs* will compenſate all their Pains and Sorrows. And in conjunction with Holineſs, there is a Divine Peace, a Joyful calm and quietneſs of Conſcience in the ſenſe of

God's favour; his answers of Peace are usually a reward according to the operations of Grace; His Comforts are dispensed, as encouragements to Obedience. Besides, when the Sinful Corruptions are purged out, which caused perpetual disturbance, and our Affections and Actions are correspondent to the Divine Law, there is that clearness and serenity of Mind, that rest and ease in the Soul, arising from its just and due subordination unto God, which the disobedient, in all their seeming prosperity, never enjoy. *There is no peace*, saith my God, *to the Wicked.* These beginnings of happiness are obtained here, but the perfection of it is in the next Life. *Blessed is the Man that endureth Temptation, for when he is tryed he shall receive*

Jam. 1. 12.

receive the Crown of Righteouſneſs, which God hath promiſed to them that love him. The richneſs and value of the *Crown of Life* is ſo great, that God, the moſt wiſe and juſt eſteemer of things, gave the precious Blood of his Son to purchaſe it for us. It is a Felicity ſo tranſcendent in its quality, and ſtable in its duration, that the Bleſſed God cannot give us a greater; for what greater good is conceivable than himſelf? and what more ſtable enjoyment of it than Eternity? The hope of this makes a Chriſtian Bleſſed in the midſt of the greateſt miſeries. *Our light Afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* 2 Cor. 4.

Fifthly; The infinite Wiſdom of God orders all things in the beſt

beſt manner for his own Glory, and the final good of his People. If he governed by abſolute Empire, none in Heaven or Earth might ſay to him, What doſt thou? but there is an inſeparable connection between his Wiſdom and his Will; he is *the King Eternal*, and *the only Wiſe God*, as the Apoſtle joins thoſe Divine Titles. In this the excellence of the Divine Liberty ſhines, that 'tis always regulated by Infinite Wiſdom: *He works all things according to the Counſel of his Will*: this is ſpoken according to humane conceptions, but muſt be underſtood in a ſenſe becoming the Perfections of God: for Counſel cannot properly be attributed to God, whoſe Underſtanding is Infinite, and in one view comprehends all things; but as thoſe

1 Tim. 1.

Eph. 1. 11.

those things are most compleat that are the product of our deliberate reasonings and deep contrivance; *so his work is perfect, for all his ways are Judgment.* Deut. 32. 4. When ever we are dissatisfied or displeased with his Proceedings, it is from the Error of our Minds, and the Viciousness of our Affections. we presume to correct his Providence, as if it were defective in regulating the affairs of this lower World; but *he is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working.* Isa. 28. 29. In the Creation, this regular and beautiful World was formed out of Darkness and Confusion: And his Providence, that is now misterious and vailed to us, will bring into glorious Order and sweet Agreement, those things in their final resolution, that now seem so perplext to our Apprehensions.

henſions. 'Twas a confounding reproach from God to *Job*, *Who is this that darkens Counſel by words without knowledg?* His paſſionate exclamations were ſuch, as if the Divine Wiſdom had not diſpoſed all the Afflicting circumſtances in the ſeries of his Sufferings; and that Holy Man being convinced of his preſumptuous Folly, repeats the Charge againſt himſelf with tears of Confuſion: *Who is he that bideth Counſel without Knowledg? therefore have I uttered that I underſtood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not; wherefore I abhor my ſelf, and repent in Duſt and Aſhes.* More particularly,

Job. 32. 2.

Job 42. 3. 6.

First; all things are ſo wiſely ordered, that God ſhall be glorified in the event; and it is the nobleſt diſpoſition of a Chriſtian, to prefer the advancement of his Glory,

Glory, before all the Comforts of this Life, and Life it ſelf. Our Bleſſed Saviour in the Forethoughts of his Sufferings, was in diſtreſs and perturbation of Mind, like the darkening of the Sky before a great Shower: *Now is my Soul troubled, what ſhall I ſay? Father, ſave me from this Hour.* John 12. 27. But the ſhort conflict of Nature was preſently at an end, he willingly yielded up himſelf to be a Sacrifice to the Divine Honour, and ſaid, *Father, glorify thy Name.* *Moſes* and *Paul*, whoſe admirable Zeal, had only a Parallel between themſelves in the ſame degree of Holy heat, deſired the Salvation of the *Jews* before their own, if God might be more glorified by it. This is the firſt Petition in Order and Dignity, in that compleat form of Prayer compoſed

composed by our Saviour, as the Rule of all our desires. *Thy Name be Hallowed and Glorified in us, and by us.* The admirable History of *Jephtha's* only Daughter, is applicable to this purpose; she joifully came forth to meet her Father, returning Victorious and Triumphant after his War with the *Ammonites.* He had made a rash Vow, to offer up in Sacrifice to God, who ever should first meet him after his Victory; and upon the sight of his Daughter, was so deeply wounded with Sorrow, that his Triumph was converted into Lamentations: but the Grief was only in the Father; for in that first surprise of such a terrible Sentence to be executed upon her, she did not answer his Tears with Tears, nor Lamentations with Lamentations, but said unto him,

Judg. 11 36.

My

My Father, if thou haſt opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me, according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, for as much as the Lord hath taken Vengeance for thee on thine Enemies. Methinks the admirable Love and Generoſity in a young Virgin, to whom her Father's Honour and Exaltation was more dear than her Life, upbraids us for our unwilling ſubmiſſion to thoſe Providential Diſpenſations that are ungrateful to Fleſh and Blood, wherein the Glory of God is advanced. If we were called to Martyrdom for his Truth, and our Lives ſhould bleed forth, as Sacrifices on the Altar, or our Bodies be conſumed as Incenſe on the Cenſer, it were an unjuſt and ungrateful complaint, to expreſs paſſionate reluctancy againſt his Providence. If there were

no

other consequences of our present Sufferings, but the glorifying God, we should be content. That is the worthiest end which he proposeth to himself, and will accomplish: His Divine excellencies will be illústrated by the wickedness of Men, that at present obscures the Glory of his Government; his Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Mercy and Justice will be acknowledged, admired, and magnified at last.

2. His Wisdom will order all things, even the most afflicting and dolorous, for the good of his People. This is a fearful Paradox to a carnal Mind, that judgeth of Good and Evil, as present things are pleasant or unpleasant to sense, without regard to what is future. 'Tis like *Sampson's* Riddle to the *Philistims*, *Out of the*

Devourer

Devourer came Meat, and out of the Strong came ſweetneſs; But to the Mind that hath ſpiritual diſcerning, and judgeth of Good and Evil, as things are conducive or deſtructive to the happineſs of the Soul, it is a clear undoubted Truth. *We know*, ſaith the Apoſtle with the greateſt aſſurance, *that all things work together for good to them that love God.* All things the moſt adverſe to their preſent deſires, are ſo diſpoſed and overruled by his Providence, as if there were a ſecret intelligence and concert between them, to promote the Happineſs of the Saints: thus in mixt Bodies the contrary qualities are reduced to ſuch a juſt meaſure and temperament by the Wiſdom of the Divine Maker, that a ſound and healthful conſtitution reſults from them. Rom. 8. 28.

We have a rare instance of this in the History of *Joseph*, his envious Brethren were the Instruments of his Exaltation: they sold him for a Slave into *Egypt* to frustrate his Prophetick Dreams, and there, by many admirable turns of Providence, he was advanced to the highest Dignity; and then was verified in him and his Brethren, *that his Sheaf arose and stood upright, and their Sheaves stood round, and did obeisance to his Sheaf.* God had reserved purposes of greater good for *Joseph*, than if he had continued under his Fathers tender Eye and Care; therefore 'tis said in his History, that they perfideously *sold him but God sent him.* He that attentively reads the Journeys of the *Israelites* through the Wilderness to *Canaan*, cannot but wonder at

at the Circuits and indirect motions in their tedious Travel for Forty Years; and when near the Borders of the place, so long and ardently desired, they were often commanded to retreat in the same Line wherein they had advanced to it: had they chose the shortest way, and disobeyed the Divine Conducter, they had never entred into the Land of Promise: but following the Pillar that directed their March, though they seem'd lost in their intricate wandrings, yet they obtained the joyful possession of it. This was a Type of the Saints passage through a troublesom World, to the true rest above; and that they are guided through many cross ways directly to the Kingdom of Heaven. *Who knows,* saith Solomon, *what is good for a Man in this Life,* Eccles. 6. 12.

all the days of his vain Life, which he ſpendeth as a ſhadow? That which is deſir'd with importunity, as tending to his Happineſs, often proves his Woe: Some had not been ſo wicked, and conſequently ſo miſerable, if their Luſts had not been excited by Riches and Power: others had not been ſecured from deſtructive Temptations, but in a low and afflicted ſtate. 'Tis therefore both our Duty and Intereſt not to pray abſolutely for any temporal thing; but when our Deſires are moſt paſſionate, to ſay with the humility and holineſs, the reverence and obedience of our Saviour, *Not my Will, but thine be done.* We ſhall find our ſelves more happy by the Divine diſpoſal of things, than if we had obtained our deareſt Wiſhes, and moſt ardent Prayers,

ers. And when we ſhall come to the top of the Holy Hill, and look down on the various Circuits of Providence by which we aſcended, we ſhall then underſtand that Wiſdom and Love conducted us ſafely to Felicity; we ſhall approve and admire all the Divine methods in order to our bleſſed End. Now the belief of this ſhould compoſe us to a patient and cheerful reſignation of our ſelves to God's Providence and Pleaſure. Who would not accept of the Counſel of a Friend that proceeds from Love, though his Judgment were not ſo exact as to be relied on? Much more ſhould we thankfully receive the Appointments of God, whoſe Knowledg and Affection are equally ſuperlative, in whom there is united the Wiſdom of

a Father's (and the tenderneſs of a Mother's) Love to his Children. Briefly, as *Jonathan* by taſting the Honey at the end of his Rod, had his eyes enlightened, ſo the end of the ſevereſt Chaſtiſements will convince them, that the Providence of God was more benign and propitious than they could imagine. *His ways are as far above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, as the Heavens are above the Earth.* This Point is applicable to us.

Uſe 1. Firſt; by way of Reproof for our unſubmiſſive behaviour in Afflictions, our uncompliance with the Divine Diſpoſals. Some are in a ſecret diſcontent at God's Afflicting Providence; and this razeth the memory of former Mercies, and takes away the reliſh

liſh of preſent Mercies; as the ſweet Showers of Heaven that fall into the Sea are turned into its brackiſh taſte; ſuch neither enjoy God nor themſelves. What egregious folly and vile ingratitude is this! All we have, is from his moſt free favour; and ſhall we peeviſhly ſlight his Benefits, becauſe our Deſires are not gratified in every reſpect? Others are moved with Anger and Vexation for the Evils that befal them: as the Red-hot Iron under the blows of the Hammer caſts abroad Fiery Sparks; ſo their ſtubborn fierce Spirits, when afflicted, break forth in expreſſions of impatience and diſpleaſure. They count it a baſe abjectneſs of Mind, a deſpicable Puſillanimity to humble themſelves under God's Judgments, and with contrition for their Sins

to implore his Clemency. *The voice of the Lord maketh the Hinds to calve the timerous and weak creatures: But when the Heavens roar, the Lions Thunder back again.* Thus ſtrong and ſtubborn Sinners, when they feel the effects of God's Anger, are raging and furious in their Paſſions and Expreſſions. *The fooliſh Man perverteth his way, his moſt grievous ſufferings are the fruits of his Sins, and his Heart fretteth againſt the Lord as the inflicter of them.* This is a high indignity to God, and an injury to themſelves. For a vile Creature, a baſe guilty Wretch to murmur and ſtorm againſt God's righteous Judgments, argues a Prodigious Forgetfulneſs, both of its dependance and obnoxiouſneſs to the Divine Tribunal. It is ſaid of the adherents of Antichriſt, *that they were*

Prov. 19 3.

ſcorched

ſcorched with great heat, and blaſphemed the name of God, which hath power over the Plagues, and they repented not to give him Glory. Infinite Inſolence! Such obſtinate Souls the Prince of Darkneſs poſſeſſes as his peculiar Dominion; they have more need of Converſion than Conſolation. Beſides, by impatience and vexatious fretting, they exaſperate their pains, turn the Rod into a Serpent, Vipers into Dragons; and God's mighty hand is more heavy by their reſiſtance. Bold Expoſtulations irritate his Anger, rather than incline his Mercy; the wilful Man never wants Woe. *With the froward*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf froward*, or, as it is rendred in the Margent, *wreſtle*. The ſtrongeſt Sinner is not a Match for the Almighty; if his Anger Rev. 16. 9. Pſal. 80.

Anger excite his Power, how eaſily, *how ſuddenly are they deſtroyed without remedy*? Stubborn impatience under the inflictions of God's righteous Providence, is the neareſt Step to final ruine. Others are ſo dejected and broken with Afflictions, that their continuance in the World is but a Living Death: every thing entertains their Grief, and the beſt means afforded for their reviving and comfort are ineffectual. Sorrow flows into Deſpair, they lament and languiſh as if their caſe were hopeleſs and remedileſs. The Fountain of this black Stream, is a ſuperlative eſteem and affection to inferiour things, and what is reſerved for the Bleſſed Creator? If a temporal Loſs be the moſt afflicting Evil, 'tis a ſign that God was not valued and loved

loved as the chiefeſt Good. The difficulty of receiving Conſolation, ſhews the neceſſity of their being afflicted: the Language of ſuch reſolved Sorrow is, *They have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?* The ſole objects of their felicity are removed, and they refuſe to be comforted; as if no leſs Sacrifice were due to the remembrance of their loſs, but Life it ſelf. What a diſparagement is this of the Divine Excellencies? *Are the conſolations of God ſmall to us?* Is not his Love able to compenſate the loſs of a frail, mutable, mortal Creature? Cannot he pleaſe and ſatisfy us without the fruition of one Earthly Comfort? This dejection of Spirit is equally undutiful as uncomfortable; our Griefs are ſometimes as vain and as guilty as our Joys; there is a tincture

tincture of Disobedience in our Tears: for we are commanded *to mourn as if we mourned not, for the fashion of the World passeth away*, and we at once break his Law and our own Peace. Our Disobedience in this is aggravated, as being contrary not only to the Authority and Sanctity of the Lawgiver, but to his Loving-Kindness and Compassion. Ah, the miserable blindness of Humane Minds! and the more miserable, because voluntary. Who is more deservedly unhappy than one that sits upon the bank of a River, and yet is Tormented and Dies with Thirst? the clear, fresh Stream passeth before him, allures and invites him, but he will not stoop to drink; this is the case of those who neglect and refuse the Spiritual Consolations in the Gospel, that

that are compared to the flowing Rivers of Living Water, for their cooling, refreſhing quality. They meritoriouſly and actively bring trouble to their Souls; their Paſſions are the Inſtruments of their Miſery. He that is his own Executioner, has no excuſe of Dying; he is juſtly, becauſe wilfully miſerable. Conſider alſo what a reproach is caſt upon Chriſtianity, that ſo many vertuous Heathens in great Afflictions, were in ſome meaſure ſupported by the Precepts of Humane Wiſdom; and that Chriſtians, to whom there is revealed from Heaven, that an Eternal ſtate of Glory and Joy ſhall be the reward of their patient Sufferings, remain utterly diſconſolate. I will ſingle out one example. *Stilpon* the Philoſopher, when his City was deſtroyed, John 3. 38, 39.

with his Wife and Children, and he escap't alone from the Fire, being asked whether he had lost any thing? replied, *All my Treasures are with me*, Justice, Vertue, Temperance, Prudence, and this inviolable Principle; not to esteem any thing as my proper Good, that can be ravish't from me: his Mind was erect and stedfast under the Ruins of his Country. And others upon lower and less generous considerations, have born up in their Sufferings. How do such Examples upbraid us, that their Twilight excells our Noon-day Brightness? If common Cordials raised such courageous Spirits in them, shall not the Waters of Life, the Divine strong Comforts of the Gospel, fortify us to bear all Sufferings with a valiant Resignation to the good

Omnia bona mea mecum sunt. Justitia, Virtus, Temperantia, Prudentia, hoc ipsum nihil boni putare quod eripi possit. Seneca *Epist.* 9.

good Will of God? Can the Spirit of a Man, by rational Principles ſuſtain his Infirmities, and cannot the Spirit of God, the great Comforter, ſupport us under all Troubles? What a blot is this to Religion? Thoſe who will not be comforted, will not be Chriſtians; by the ſame Holy Spirit who is ſtiled the Comforter, we are the one and the other. If the precious Promiſes of the Goſpel do not alleviate our Sorrows, 'tis not from Infirmity, but from Infidelity. 'Tis an incredible Miracle, that a perſon can be in reality a Chriſtian, and not capable of Conſolation; as if Eternal Life were not purchaſed by Chriſt for his People, or the preſent Sufferings were comparable to the future Glory? or the poſſeſſion of it were to be obtained after a

thouſand

years of hard trial: But if it were delayed so long, that sensible duration should not sink our Spirits; for the Misery that passeth with Time, is not of moment with respect to the Blessedness that is establish'd for Ever.

Use 2. Secondly; Let us be excited to transcribe this Divine Lesson (so full of excellency and difficulty) in our Hearts and Lives. 'Tis easy in Speculation to consent to the reasonableness of this Duty, but how hard to practise it, and to bear not too sensibly such Evils as are incurable here? A deliberate, universal, constant subjection to God's Will, though contrary to our Carnal desires and interests, how rarely is it to be found among those who in Title and Profession are his Servants?

In

In Active Obedience, ſome will readily perform ſome particular Commands, but withdraw ſubjection from the reſt; they ſeem to make Conſcience of the Duties of Piety, but neglect Righteouſneſs; or elſe are juſt in their Dealings, and careleſs of Devotion. Some are liberal but irreconcilable; they will give for their Honour, but forgive no Contempt or Injury; and as the dividing living Twins deſtroys them, ſo the Life and Sincerity of Obedience, that conſiſts in the union and intireneſs of its parts, is deſtroyed by dividing our reſpects to ſome commands, neglecting the reſt. And in *Paſſive Obedience*, many will ſubmit to lighter and ſhorter afflictions, but if an Evil comes that nearly touches the heart, or that remains long with-

out redreſs, they become impatient, or ſo dejected as to neglect their Duty. I ſhall therefore ſuperadd to the former Arguments, wherein the Neceſſity, the Equity, and the Policy of our Dutiful Reſignation to God's Providence is clearly ſet forth, ſome other Motives and Directions, that may be uſeful and effectual for this end.

Firſt; Look frequently to Jeſus Chriſt, the Author and finiſher of our Faith: The Divine Wiſdom, to reform the World, aſſumed the Humane Nature, and expreſſed in a Holy Converſation upon Earth, a living Copy of his Precepts, to direct us in the various parts of our Duty; and becauſe the exerciſe of Humility, Self Denial, and the reſt of the Suffering Graces, is ſo difficult to our

our frail and tender Nature; he aſcended the Croſs, and inſtructs us by Suffering to ſuffer with his Affections, leaving us his Example, as the beſt Lecture of our Duty; His Sufferings concern us not only in point of Merit but Conformity. We can never enjoy the benefit of his Paſſion, without following his Patern. His example is the Rule of the higheſt Perfection, and we are under the greateſt obligation to imitate and honour him who is our Sovereign and Saviour, to whom we owe our Redemption from everlaſting Miſery, and the Inheritance of Glory. 'Tis the Apoſtle's advice to the afflicted, *to conſider him that endured ſuch contradiction of Sinners againſt himſelf, that ye be not wearied, and faint in your minds.* This deduction is with greater force Heb. 12. 3.

to make us humble and patient; If we consider,

First; the Infinite Dignity of his Person. He was the Eternal and Onely Son of God, and descended from the Throne of his Majesty, divested himself of his Robes of insupportable Light, that concealed and manifested his Glory to the Angels, and was obedient to the Death of the Cross: what are the highest and best of Men to him? Were it not extreamly unbecoming and undutiful for a Subject to refuse Obedience to a just Law, if the King that made the Law should voluntarily observe it, and reserve no other advantage to himself, but the honour of enacting it? Our Saviour did not stand upon the dignity and liberty of his Person being equal with God, and our King,

Psa. 104

King, but intirely complied with the Law, and ſhall we complain of its rigour?

Secondly; The Greatneſs of his Sufferings. They were incomparable as to their value, ſo in their degrees. He endured the equal extremities of Infamy and Torment, that are ſo contrary to the inclinations of Mankind. He was Crowned with a cruel Diadem of Thorns, Scourged, Spit upon, Derided, Crucified; Inſenſible Nature, as if capable of Underſtanding and Affection, was diſordered in its whole frame at his Death. The Heavens ſympathized, in Eclipſes of the Sun, in the darkneſs of the Air at Midday, as Midnight; the Earth quak't with deep Tremblings, and the Rocks were rent aſunder. And the Sufferings of his Soul from the

incenſed Juſtice of God were inconceivably great. What is the worſt we ſuffer either immediately from God, or inſtrumentally from Men, to his bitter Paſſion? Our Sufferings are but ſuperficial ſhadows of Miſery, compared to his deep Sorrows.

Thirdly; His Sufferings were moſt undeſerved: For he was the Holy One of God, his Conception without the leaſt taint of Sin, his Life of ſtricteſt Purity, and compleat Obedience to the Divine Law. We may read the proceſs of our Sins, and underſtand their Guilt in his Paſſion. *He was made Sin for us,* (a Sacrifice to atone the Divine Diſpleaſure) *who knew no Sin:* As *David* when Guilty of Adultery and Murder, was fired with diſdain at the relation of an incompaſſionate

ſionate Rich Man, killing the ſingle Lamb of his poor Neighbour, and ſparing his own numerous Flock; and when the Prophet unveiled the Parable, and ſurpriſed him with that piercing reproach, *Thou art the Man!* he preſently by that Fiction in another, was convinced of his own true guilt, and was extreamly afflicted in the ſenſe of it: Thus we are apt to conceive indignation againſt the Murderers of our Saviour, the Apoſtate Apoſtle, the Malicious Prieſt, the Unrighteous Judg, the Bloody Soldiers. But Conſcience (as a true *Nathan*) may charge us to have been in that wicked Conſpiracy againſt the Lord of Glory, for our Sins Condemned and Crucified him.

And as our Sins were the impulſive cauſe of his Sufferings, ſo

our good is the effect of them. He ſuffered the Death of the Croſs, that his Blood might be our Ranſom, his Ignominy the purchaſe of our Glory, his Torments the merit of our Bleſſedneſs, his Death the Seed of Immortal Life to us; but we ſuffer the juſt puniſhment of our own Sins.

Fourthly; His willing Obedience, Divine Patience, and invincible Conſtancy in Suffering for us. In his diſtreſs, the whole Army of Heaven were in readineſs for his Protection and Reſcue, upon the leaſt ſignification of his Will; *If I prayed to my Father, he would ſend me twelve Legions of Angels.* Nay, he had the Springs and Keys of the Divine Power in his hands, and could by a Word have deſtroyed his Ene-

Enemies; *but he freely gave himſelf for us*, and without reſiſtance, without complaint took up his Croſs. Now our Saviour, who had the fulneſs of the Spirit, communicates to us the firſt Fruits of it, Faith and Love, Humility and Patience, Peace and Joy to ſupport us under Affliction.

Fifthly; Conſider the excellent reward of his Sufferings. He was abaſed below Men, and is advanced above all the Angelical Orders, and is the Eternal Argument of their Praiſes; Never were Sufferings ſo grievous, never was Iſſue ſo glorious. *For the Joy that was ſet before him, he endured the Croſs, deſpiſed the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Majeſty on high.* Heb. 12. 2. Now our Bleſſed Saviour hath promiſed, *To him that overcomes, will I grant to ſit with* Rev. 3. 21.

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me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his Throne. Unfainting Perseverance in our Duty shall be rewarded with the Glory of our Redeemer. And is not the prospect and expectation of this sufficient to confirm our Minds, and make us patiently bear the greatest Afflictions?

Secondly; The Consideration of the Suffering Saints in all Ages, is a powerful perswasive to Patience. Thus the Apostle *James* directs Christians, *Take, my Brethren the Prophets, who have spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an example of suffering Affliction, and of Patience.* And we have great encouragement from hence, if we consider,

Jam. 5. 10.

1. That those who are of most precious account with God, and

and highly favoured by him, are uſually exerciſed with ſharp Afflictions. The ſingularity and greatneſs of a Calamity exaſperates the Sorrow, when it is apprehended as a ſign of extraordinary Guilt in the Afflicted, and of ſevere diſpleaſure in God that ſends it; but to prevent Trouble that ariſeth from that apprehenſion, the Scripture records the heavy Afflictions that happened to God's choſen Servants and Favourites. *Moſes*, whom God honoured with the moſt condeſcending and familiar Diſcoveries of himſelf, was tried by long Afflictions. *David*, a Man after God's own Heart, was a long time hurled to and fro by Tempeſtuous Perſecutions from his unjuſt and implacable Enemies. *Iſaiah*, who was dignified with ſuch Heavenly

ly Revelations, that his describing the Sufferings of Christ seems rather the History of an Evangelist, than the Vision of a Prophet, was sawn asunder.

2. Their Nature was as frail as ours, their Afflictions as cutting and sensible, yet how patiently and couragiously did they endure the most cruel Sufferings?

3. We have the same blessed Comforter to assist us, as they had, the Holy Spirit. He that is stiled the Spirit of Power, infuseth a holy Magnanimity to bear the heaviest Sufferings. Now it is the Apostles Inference from the History of the Saints under the Old Testament, some of whom died Martyrs, and others lived Martyrs, by their constant and generous suffering various evils for Divine Truth. *Wherefore seeing*

we are compaſſed about with ſo great a Cloud of Witneſſes, let us lay aſide every weight, and the Sin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us. Heb. 12. 1.

The Metaphorical Expreſſion, a *Cloud of Witneſſes*, imports a numerous Company, and is by ſome of the Ancients interpreted as an Alluſion to the Benefit we receive from the Natural Clouds, that refreſh the Air, and skreen us from the ſcorching heat of the Sun. The Alluſion is too ſubtile and ſtrain'd, but the Benefit is real; for the admirable examples of their Patience and Courage are powerful to refreſh ſorrowful Spirits; *We are encompaſſed with them as a Theatre*: There is no kind of Affliction, and no part of our Duty, whereof there is not preſented to us ſome example for our

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Encouragement and Imitation. It is also worthy of Observation, that Christians have a special Obligation, Encouragement, and Assistance to bear Afflictions with chearful Spirits, above the Believers of the Old Testament. For under the *Mosaic* Dispensation, outward Prosperity, Riches, Honour, Victory, long Life were the open Expressions of God's Favour, promised by the terms of that Covenant, as Rewards to Obedience. Yet even then, some of the most excellent Saints were illustrious Examples of patient suffering Afflictions. But in the Gospel God hath declared, that his design is to train up his Children by Sufferings for their future Happiness, that *through many Tribulations they must enter into the Kingdom of God.* And we find

find the truth of this by manifold Experience, from the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church. St. *John* by Revelation, *Beheld a great multitude, which no Man could number, of all Nations, and Kindreds, and People, and Tongues, that ſtood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, cloathed with white Robes, and Palms in their Hands: And they all came out of great Tribulation, and had waſhed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb:* Now ſince the Croſs is an Appendix to the Goſpel, we ſhould with more prepared Minds ſubmit to it. Beſides, if Believers then, who enjoyed only *Star-Light*, leſs clear diſcoveries of the glorious World to come, were ſo patient and conſtant in ſuffering for the Truth; How much more ſhould we be animated in our Troubles, to whom Rev. 7. 9.

whom the *Sun of Righteouſneſs* appears, revealing Life and Immortality by the Goſpel? If they who were partakers of the Holy Spirit in leſſer degrees, were ſupported; ſhould not Chriſtians that receive the Graces of the Spirit in richer abundance, be more comforted?

Thirdly; All Creatures obey the Will of the Creator: All the lower Rank, *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, and ſtormy Winds fulfil his Word.* *The Sun ſtood ſtill* till *Joſhua* had compleated his Victory, *it ſtarted back* to confirm the Faith of *Hezekiah*. Nay, ſenſible Creatures will contradict their own Natures at God's Command. The Ravens fed *Elias*, and the Lions ſpared *Daniel*. And Creatures of the Superior Order exactly fulfil his Will. *The Angels that excel in ſtrength, do his Commandments:*

Pſal. 148. 8.

ments: hearkning to the Voice of his Word. They do not uſurp upon his Royalty, nor make uſe of their Power to deny ſubjection to his Pleaſure. Now if the Inferior Creatures, who are under leſs Obligations, and cannot underſtand their Duty; if Superior Creatures that excel us in Nobility of Nature, and Dignity of State, perfectly obey God: ſhould not their example ſtrongly incite us to ſubmit to his Will? Pſal. 103.

Fourthly; It is our moſt glorious Perfection to have our Wills united to the Divine Will. In Heaven Grace is in its exaltation, the Spirits of juſt Men are made perfect by their compliance with the Divine Will that abſolutely governs there. A private Will that compounds with God upon ſordid Capitulations, that excepts

againſt doing or ſuffering what is diſtaſteful and harſh to the carnal part, How unreaſonable, how degenerous and baſe is it? But when the Will is obedient, enlarged and uniform with God, 'tis enobled. If our ſlow-paced Thoughts could conceive things as eaſily, ſuddenly and clearly as the Angels do, our Minds would be in the higheſt Elevation: And is it not a more valuable and deſirable Perfection to will as God does, than to underſtand as the Angels?

Hic eſt magnus animus qui ſe Deo tradidit. Senec.

Beſides, Patience has a ſpecial eminence above other Graces, and advances a Chriſtian to the higheſt Honour and Perfection that is attainable here. All Graces are of the ſame Divine Extraction, and have the ſame general effect upon the Soul: They come from God,

God, and produce a God-like Temper and Disposition: But they are distinguish'd by their Objects and Operations; some are Heroick, exercis'd about great things, and produce more noble Actions: others are humble and conversant in meaner things, and their Operations are less eminent. As amongst the Birds, the Eagles fly aloft, and only stoop for a great Prey: The Bees fly from Flower to Flower, and extract a little Dew, but 'tis all Honey. It is the Counsel of St. *James* to the afflicted, *Let Patience have her perfect Work*, in bearing Afflictions though heavy and continued, *that you may be perfect, and entire, wanting nothing*. A singular Perfection and Encomium is attributed to Patience, in that the trial and exercise of it is the most difficult

part of our Duty, and without it we can neither obey the Commands, nor obtain the Promises of the Gospel. *Patience* is the truest *Fortitude*, and draws forth other Divine Graces in their excellent activity. What the temper is to material Weapons that are blunted or broken in the Combate without it, Patience is to other Graces, their stability is derived from it. This was the most glorious perfection of Christ's Obedience, *For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many Sons to Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings.* Patience is not only defensive Armour, but has noble Operations. When our Saviour was nailed to the Cross, and was the Mark wherein all the poisoned Arrows

Heb. 2.

of

of Rage and Malice were received, he ſeemed only to *Suffer*, yet even then performed the moſt *divine Exploits*, and obtained the moſt glorious Victory; he reconciled God, diſarm'd the Law, ſubdued Satan, broke the Gates of Hell, deſtroyed Death, and reſcued us miſerable forlorn Captives. Upon this account *Chryſoſtom* breaks forth in rapturous Expreſſions, That our Saviour ſuffering on the Croſs, was more glorious than in his creating the World. Thus the Patience of a Chriſtian, which in appearance is only a quiet bearing Affliction from God, yet produceth many bleſſed effects: A Believer, while he feels the weight of *God's Hand*, unceſſantly ſeeks his *Face* with the moſt ardent Affections. He doth not murmur againſt the Diſplea-

ſure of God, but mourns bitterly that he hath deſerved it. He ſurrenders himſelf to the Divine Pleaſure, which is the pureſt Act of Obedience. He ſubdues his unruly Paſſions, which is a more noble Victory than the Atchievements of the moſt celebrated Conquerors. 'Tis true, the power of Grace is very conſpicuous in reſiſting pleaſant Temptations, the pernicious attractives of the Senſes and carnal Appetites; but more in the Battels of Patience, by how much 'tis more eaſy to Nature to be content without unneceſſary and ſuperficial Pleaſures, than to endure oppreſſing and painful Evils. I will produce an inſtance in both kinds, recorded in Scripture, for the Veneration and Imitation of all. The firſt is that of *Joſeph*, whoſe unſpotted Cha-

Chaſtity was diſcovered by rejecting the impure deſires of his Maſter's Wife. Three powerful Tempters join'd to draw his Conſent, Solitude, Youth, and Solicitation; Solitude with its Silence, is often more perſuaſive to the commiſſion of Sin than the ſtrongeſt Eloquence; becauſe there being none that ſees, takes away the ſhame of being ſeen in guilty and foul Actions. Youth is violent in its Appetites, and needs no intreaties to induce it to gratify them: The Senſual Fancy reigns, and has ſuch a raviſhing power upon the Will, that to corrupt Nature the Temptation is irreſiſtible, and without Divine Strength, an inſtance of overcoming it, would be as rare as a *Phœnix* in the World. Beſides, *Joſeph* was her Slave, and was tempted

by intreaties mixt with intice-ments from a Superiour, that (like a Bow that draws Strength from its bending) by making a ſhow of ſubjection acquires a double Empire. But he had a re-verence of his inviſible Obſerver and Judge: *How ſhall I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* Now *Joſeph* in the Flower of his Age, was not emboldened by Solitude, nor excited by Concu-piſcence, nor poiſon'd by the breath of the Baſilisk, was an ad-mirable effect of Divine Grace. He preſerved his ſincere and con-ſtant Innocence, as the Sun its un-defiled luſtre in the midſt of all the feculent exhalations that aſ-cend from the Earth.

The other Inſtance is *Job*, whoſe Victorious Grace in the compariſon, is more glorious than that

that of *Joſeph*; for as the lapſes of thoſe who by Terrors and Torments violate the Law, are leſs culpable, and more excuſable, than of thoſe who by Senſual Allurements tranſgreſs the Divine Commands: The Humane Nature being capable of ſuch dolorous impreſſions as infinitely exceed all the Pleaſures of Senſe; and conſequently the yielding from fear of vehement pains and extreme evils, is leſs voluntary than what proceeds from the Love of Delights; ſo proportionably that Vertue is more eminent that remains firm, and preſerves us in our Duty, notwithſtanding the Batteries of extream Evils, than that which preſerves us by flight from the deceitful ſenſitive good.

Mille pia cer non vagliono un tormento.

The Holy Ghoſt has given us a particular Narrative of *Job's* Troubles

Troubles, and his behaviour under them: The loſs of a great Eſtate was but a preparative for worſe Calamities; his Ten Children were all deſtroyed in a day; his Body was covered with Ulcers; his Wife, that in this deſolate Condition was onely left to alleviate his Sorrows, unſpeakably encreas'd them; yet under this heavy weight of Miſeries, he did not expreſs one unbecoming complaint. His Patience exceeded all the Pains of his Body, and Griefs of his Mind. Who loves God ſo ardently in his Proſperity as he did in his Afflictions? Like Flaming Torches, that reverſt, the Flame aſcends with more force to Heaven. St. *Auſtin* admiring his Invincible Temper, ſays, that *Job* half dead on the Dunghil, was ſtronger than *Adam*, when

Immortal

Immortal in Paradiſe; for with Indignation he repuls'd his Wife, who was Satan's Inſtrument to tempt him to Deſpair and Blaſphemy. How graceful and amiable a Spectacle is a patient Saint? He attracts the Eye and Heart of God himſelf. What an honourable Teſtimony proceeded from his Mouth, concerning *Job*, to vindicate his Sincerity from the malice of the Accuſer? *Haſt thou* Job 2. 3. *ſeen my Servant Job, that there is none like him on the Earth?* Unparallel'd Saint! who endured ſuch a ſucceſſion of Tragical Events with humility and ſubmiſſion! The active holineſs of his Proſperous Life, is not recorded with that Note of eminency and admiration, as his Patient Sufferings, for which he is univerſally Crowned with the Praiſes of

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the Saints in all Ages. *Ye have heard of the Patience of Job!* He is a ſpectacle that draws the regards of all, more famous for his Patience than his Miſery. 'Tis the ſaying of the *Platonick* Philoſopher, Take away from the Life of *Hercules*, the Tyrants he ſuppreſt, and the fierce Beaſts he ſlew, his Travels and Combats wherein his Courage was exerciſed and appear'd, and you leſſen his Vertue, the Hero is loſt; He that in the Opinion of the Heathen World deſerved a Deity, and is crowned with Stars in Heaven, will not have a ſpark of Glory on Earth to preſerve his Fame alive in Memory. Thus, take away from *Job* the *Chaldean* and *Sabean* Robbers, the ſhower of Fire that conſumed his Eſtate, the Whirlwind raiſed by infernal Spirits, that

that destroyed his Children, his Diseases, and his cruel Wife, the exercises of his insuperable Patience; and the honourable remembrance of *Job* is lost. If the Prince of Darkness had not tried all his Arts and Strength to overcome him, and had not been foiled in his Attempts, his Graces had not been so illustrious. St. *Peter* declares, *that the Spirit of Glory, and of God, rests upon Suffering Christians.* They are the Temples of the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Deity, wherein he displays his Divine Vertue and Glorious Power. In short, God usually conducts his People to the sublimest degrees of Grace and Glory by Suffering; the more they are tryed and refined, the brighter their Crown will be.

5. 'Tis

5. 'Tis our Felicity quietly to reſign our Wills to the Bleſſed Will of God. Patience, conſidered as a Moral Vertue, frees us from many Sorrows and Vexations that are ſupervenient to an Affliction, and are cauſed meerly from the Diſtemper, and unquiet diſorderly agitations of our own Paſſions. Nature inſtructs a Dog by licking his Wound to heal it, a lively Emblem of the healing operation of diſcreet Patience to the Afflicted Spirit. Patience lines the Yoke, and makes it ſofter and more eaſy to us. Beſides, an humble and full Submiſſion to the Will of God, as the Rule of Goodneſs, brings down the Peace and Joy of Paradiſe into our Souls. The glorified Saints are raiſed above all Diſaſters and Troubles; nothing can diſturb the

the ſerenity, or ſtain the purity of their ſtate: From this Principle of Perfection and Felicity, that God's Will is always accompliſhed, to which their Wills are intirely ſubordinate, in obedience to his Authority, and by their proper inclination. As the Waters which in the Creation God tranſported above the Heavens, are not moved as thoſe here below by the furious agitation of the Winds, but as if they were of a Cœleſtial nature, have the ſame regular motion with the Heavens. The Angels, whoſe Zeal for the Honour of God, and Love to the Souls of Men is incomparable, yet they ſee the Rebellion of his Subjects, whereby his Glory is obſcured, and the final deſtruction of Rebellious Sinners, without the leaſt diminution

nution of their Felicity, because they always acquiesce in the Divine Will, that orders all things for the best end. And so far as our Wills are complying with the Divine Will, we enjoy a tranquillity of Mind, which afflictive accidents cannot disquiet. St. *Austin* describes Blessedness to consist in the accomplishment of our desires, and in having only regular Desires: Now a Saint whose Will is absolutely resigned to God's Will, has a foretaste of Blessedness here; for whatsoever happens to him here, is from God's Will that approves or permits it, and herein he finds satisfaction. What a pure undisturbed Pleasure springs from this Consideration, that the Wisdom and Love of God chuseth always what is best for us? This will make

make us contented in every ſtate, even when our Condition is not correſpondent with our natural Deſires, our Deſires are graciouſly accorded with our Condition. What expenſive Induſtry has been uſed to procure the fancied *Philoſopher's Stone*, that changes all Metals into Gold, which if obtained cannot make us happy? For as the natural heat of the Body does not proceed from the Cloaths, but from the Body that warms them: We ſee Perſons in the Fit of an Ague ſhake with cold, tho covered with Furs; So true Felicity doth not proceed from the outward Condition, but from the Temper of the Mind. The Rich often want Content in the confluence of all things, and are often diſquieted with the fears of loſing their Poſſeſſions: But

Acquieſcence in the Divine Diſpoſal always brings ſatisfaction to the Soul. 'Tis an inviolable Treaſure that cannot by the moſt violent Evils be taken from us.

I ſhall annex two Conſiderations more, to ſhew how our Felicity is promoted by our patient Sufferings.

Firſt; 'Tis a bleſſed Aſſurance of our *Election* by the moſt free and unchangeable Love of God. The Apoſtle tells afflicted Chriſtians, *That whom he did foreknow, he did predeſtinate to be conformed to the Image of his Son, that he might be the firſt-born among many Brethren.* If we ſuffer with his divine Patience, with his humble and holy Affections, 'tis a clear and certain evidence that we are appointed to reign with him. If we bear the Image of our ſuffering Saviour in our

Rom. 8. 29.

our earthly State, we ſhall bear his glorious Image in the Heavenly. The well-grounded Hope of this is very comfortable in the greateſt Afflictions, and will encourage us to perſevere in humble Sufferings. For if his ſovereign Pleaſure has ordained us to Eternal Life, how juſt is it that we ſhould with an intire and reſigned Submiſſion yield up our ſelves to the conduct of his Wiſdom, as to the ways by which we ſhall obtain it?

Secondly; By a Filial Submiſſion to God's Chaſtiſements we have a bleſſed Teſtimony of our *Adoption*. 'Tis the Apoſtle's comfortable Inference, *If ye endure Chaſtiſements, God dealeth with you as with Sons*; that is, if without murmuring or fainting, if with that reſpect and ſubjection, that

is due to the high and holy Providence of God, then we may be assured of his Paternal Relation to us, and *his Rod comforts us*, as the strokes of it are an Argument of his care and love to us. From hence proceeds inexpressible and peculiar Consolation to afflicted Christians: The same Affliction as to the matter and circumstances, may be upon humble meek Sufferers, and refractory stubborn Sinners *that kick against the pricks*, but are distinguished by the intention of God. They are sent to the Humble as Corrections from the wise love of a Father, who dearly regards their Souls; to the Obdurate as Vengeance from the righteous severity of a Judge. Upon the Humble they fall as soft as a Shower of *Snow*; upon the other as the Storm of *fiery Hail* upon

upon the *Egyptians*: and the Iſſue of them is as different as Heaven and Hell.

Laſtly; This ſharp Diſcipline continues but during our *Minority* here, when we arrive at the ſtate of Perfection we ſhall not need it: And this Life is but a ſhort tranſition to the next World. What compariſon is there between a few Years and the Volume of Eternal Ages? 'Tis the Conſolatory of the Apoſtle, *The time is ſhort, let thoſe that weep be as if they wept not.* Within a little while afflicted Saints ſhall aſcend to the Region of Bleſſedneſs, and no Cloud of Sorrow, no Shadow of Fear, no Darkneſs of Anxiety, can reach ſo high to darken and diſturb their Felicity: *Weeping can endure but for a Night, and Joy comes in the Morn-*

ing of the everlasting Day. *For a*
Isa. 5. *moment have I hid my Face from thee, but with everlasting kindness will I receive thee, saith the Lord.* Death is the last step out of Mortality and
Jam. 5. Misery. *Be ye also patient, stablish your Hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.*

Secondly; To these Motives I shall add some Directions, for the performance of this hard Duty.

Direct. 1. A stedfast Faith in the Divine Providence and Promises, will compose the Soul to a quiet submission to God's Pleasure in the sharpest Troubles.

All things are under the intimate Inspection, the wise Conduct, the powerful Influence of his Providence. This is one of those

thoſe prime, univerſal rich Truths, from whence ſo many practical Conſequences are derived. By vertue of it, we may infallibly conclude, that all things that come to paſs, are diſpoſed in the beſt ſeaſon, and beſt manner, for the beſt ends. If we were admitted to the Council of State above, and underſtood the immediate reaſons of every particular Decree, we could not be more infallibly aſſur'd of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs, the Rectitude and Equity of his Diſpenſations, then by this univerſal Principle that is applicable to all Events, as Light to every Colour; that what God appoints is beſt. That we may feel the bleſſed influence of it more effectually, let us conſider that divine Providence extends to the whole Creation: 'Tis infinite, and

over-ruling all things. God is pleaſed to repreſent it in Scripture according to the narrowneſs of our Capacity: As *Eliſha* contracted himſelf to the ſtature of the *Shunamites* Child, applying his Mouth to his Mouth, and his Hands to his Hands. Thus 'tis ſaid, *He rides upon the Heavens*, to ſignify his abſolute power in ordering all the motions of the moſt high, vaſt and glorious part of the viſible Univerſe. *He telleth the number of the Stars; he calleth them all by their Names.* The Stars are the brighteſt and moſt active parts of the vaſt Region above us, and are called the Hoſt of Heaven with reſpect to their Number and Order. God is their General; and tho they ſeem innumerable to our Senſes, yet the multitude is exactly known to him, and yields

2 King. 4.

ready

ready and entire Obedience to his Pleaſure. From whence the Pſalmiſt infers, *Great is the Lord, and of great Power, his Underſtanding is infinite.* Pſal. 147. 5.

There is nothing in the lower World exempted from the Empire and Activity of God's Providence. He is unmoveable, and moves all; inviſible, yet appears in all. The moſt caſual things are not without his Guidance. *A Man drew a Bow at a venture*, without expreſs Aim, but God directed the Arrow through the Joints of *Ahab*'s Armour, that penetrated to the Springs of Life. The minuteſt and leaſt conſiderable things are ordered by him. A Sparrow does not fly or fall without his Diſpoſal. 'Tis not an Hyperbolical Expreſſion of our Saviour, but an abſolute Truth, 1 Kings 22. 34.

That

Mat. 10. *That all the Hairs of our Head are numbred, and not one falls to the Ground without his Licence.* The voluntary and most indetermin'd causes of things are under his Conduct. The Hearts of Men, even of Kings that are most absolute and unconfin'd, are in the Hand of the Lord, he turns them according to his Pleasure; as the streams of Water are by several Trenches conveyed to refresh a Garden by the Skilful Husbandman.

Sin, that is the most disorderly thing in the World, is not only within the compass of his Permission, but is limited and disposed by his Providence: And such is his Goodness, that he would not permit it, if his Power could not over-rule that Evil, for a Good that preponderates the Evil. And all

all afflictive Evils, by his own Declaration, are the effects of his juſt and powerful Providence. *Is there any evil in the City, and I have not done it?* His Providence is comprehenſive and complete: no unforeſeen Accidents in the freeſt and moſt contingent things, no unvoluntary obſtruction in the moſt neceſſary things, can break the intireneſs, or diſcompoſe the order of his Providence. *The Lord is in Heaven, he doth whatſoever he pleaſeth in Heaven and in Earth, in the Sea and all the deep places.* How exactly and eaſily does he manage and over-rule all things? The whole World is his Houſe, and all the ſucceſſive Generations of Men his Family; ſome are his Sons, and by voluntary ſubjection; others his Slaves, and by juſt conſtraint

ſtraint fulfil his Pleaſure. 'Twas the ſaying of a Wiſe King inſtructed by Experience, that the Art of Government, was like the laborious Travel of a Weaver, that requires the attention of the Mind, and the activity of the Body; the Eyes, Hands and Feet are all in exerciſe: And how often is the contexture of Human Counſels, though woven with great care, yet unexpectedly broke? So many croſs Accidents interpoſe, ſo many emergencies beyond all prevention ſtart up, that fruſtrate the Deſigns and Hopes of the moſt Potent Rulers of this World. But God diſpoſes all things with more facility than one of us can move a grain of Sand: the Government of the World has a leſs proportion to his Infinite Wiſdom, and un-

uncontrollable Power, than a grain of Sand hath to the ſtrength of a Man. His Counſel ſhall always ſtand; all ſecond Cauſes depend upon him in their Beings, their agency and influences. Nothing is executed in this viſible Kingdom below, but by expreſs Order from his inviſible Court; and all Occurrences are made uſe of for the accompliſhing the deſigns of his Electing Mercy, in the glorification of his Saints. Now all that is comfortable and reviving, is contained in this Principle. If his Providence reaches to the Birds of the Air, and the Lillies of the Field, much more to the Saints, in whom he hath a propriety; and ſuch is his condeſcending Love, and inconceivable benignity, that he ſtiles himſelf by the moſt endearing relation

relation, *their God.* They are the prime part of his vigilant care. 'Tis St. *Auſtin's* affectionate ejaculation, *O Omnipotent Goodneſs, that ſo particularly regardeſt every one of us, as if the ſole objects of thy tender care, and all of us as ſingle perſons!* The Sun applies its quickening influences for the production and growth of a ſingle Plant as particularly as if there were no other things in the World to receive them; yet at the ſame time it paſſes from Sign to Sign in the Heavens, changes the Scenes of the Elements, produces new Seaſons, and its active and prolifick heat forms and transforms whatſoever is changed in Nature. This is a fit reſemblance of the univerſal and ſpecial operations of Divine Providence; what a ſtrong ſecurity doth this give to a Chriſtian in the midſt

O bone Omnipotens, qui ſic unumquemque noſtrum tanquam ſolum cures, & ſic omnes tanquam ſingulos! Aug. Conf. lib. 13.

midst of all Trouble in this corrupt and changeable World? How will it clear the mind from those miserable perplexities, and quiet those improvident, precipitant Passions that so often afflict the afflicted? Whatever Evils befal the Saints, are with the Knowledg, the Will, and by the efficiency of God, materially considered; and is he defective in Wisdom, Power, or Goodness, that what he does, either might or ought to be better otherwise? Indeed, sometimes the special ends of his Afflicting Providence are in such deep obscurity, that our Line is too short to fathom, and the manner how good shall result from Evil is unknown, but then we may conclude with evidence, 'tis for the best. When *Cæsarius* a Primitive Saint was arguing in himself, how that Scripture

ture could be true, that the Earth was founded on the Waters; how the more weighty Element ſhould not ſink, and be overwhelmed by the other: he ſtopt the courſe of his Thoughts by this reflection, *I forgat my ſelf when I ſaid to God, how can this be?* and admires that which he could not comprehend. For inferiour reaſons we often pray, that particular Evils that are near, may be prevented; but if they overtake us, we may be ſatisfied that they are appointed by his ſupreme Reaſon and Everlaſting Counſel. As in a Conſort of Muſick, the parts are not formed when they are ſung, but were compoſed before by the skill of the Muſician, and every part aſſign'd convenient to the Voices of the Perſons. Thus the various conditions and paſſages of our lives were ſo diſ-

Dial. 1.

poſed

poſed by the Sovereign Wiſdom of God from Eternity, and as moſt fit for us. Whether the Evils proceed more immediately and intirely from his hand, or by the intercurrence of ſecond cauſes; 'tis equally certain they come by the determinate Counſel and foreknowledg of God. Our Saviour anſwers *Pilate*, *Thou couldſt have no power at all againſt me, except it were given thee from above.* All the afflictive Evils that proceed from the malice of Men, and increaſe their Guilt and Judgment, are ordered by his Providence, for the Spiritual and Eternal Good of his People; this conſideration will prevent much Sin and Trouble that the beſt Men are liable to in their perturbations and paſſions. There is nothing more exaſperates an afflicted Mind than the

apprehenſion that one unjuſtly ſuffers,

Leniter ex merito quicquid patiare ferendum eſt:
——Quæ venit indignè pœna dolenda venit.

A righteous puniſhment even Nature conſents is to be received with meek ſubmiſſion; but to be patient under unjuſt Perſecutions, not to be provok't by Injuries and Enemies, is one of the hardeſt things in the World. If by a flaſh of Lightning, or by a ſhower of Rain, we are blaſted or wet, we endure it patiently; but if one throw Wild-fire or Water on us, we reſent the indignity with Anger and Vexation. Now, if we in our deliberate Thoughts conſider, that God not only permits, but

but ſends all the Evils we moſt unworthily ſuffer from Men, and that he commands our quiet, humble behavior under them, nay, that he will over-rule all ſo as the iſſue ſhall be bleſſed, what tranquillity and acquieſcence will it produce in the ſharpeſt Diſpenſations of his Providence? But on the contrary, exclude Providence out of the World, and the Mind is involved in Darkneſs with all its Terrors. Atheiſm is the Gulf of Impiety and Infelicity. *None ſays, where is God, my Maker, that gives Songs in the Night*, that converts Poiſons into Remedies, the ſaddeſt Evils into means of the beſt Good, and our Afflictions into Conſolations. He that lives without God in the World, if he loſeth what he ſuperlatively loves, or falls under an incurable Evil, has no other re-

medy but a resolution to endure it as well as he can: And he is extreamly miserable that has no Joy here, nor hopes of it hereafter, nor the encouragement of a happy Issue to bear it patiently.

In conjunction with the belief of God's Providence, our belief of his Promises, that his Truth is unchangeable, for the performance of them, is requisite to preserve the afflicted Spirit in a calm and submissive state. A present Evil strikes the imagination and senses in another manner than a future Spiritual Good. Now

Heb. 11. 1. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for*, &c. it makes invisible things to be the greatest realities to the Soul; the steady reliance upon the Divine Attributes engaged them to fulfil his Promises, and is of an invincible efficacy to

to ſtrengthen the Soul in every diſtreſs. *O Lord of Hoſts, bleſſed is the Man that truſteth in thee.* Pſal. 84. His uncontrollable power governs all the Orders of Creatures, and the Honour of his Truth is ſo Sacred, *that Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away without the failing of any good thing promiſed to his People.* Faith aſſiſts Patience; as the Blood that is a natural Balſam, flows to the wounded part to heal and conſolidate it. Theſe Graces are inſeparable, and are recorded with ſpecial obſervation, as the Fountains of Courage under Sufferings. *Here is the Faith and Patience of the Saints; and we are directed to follow them who through Faith and Patience have inherited the Promiſes.* Rev. 13. 10. Other Graces are engaged in the Chriſtian Combate, and ſtrive for Victory, but Faith and Patience are

Crowned. And to support us in great Troubles, a firm affiance in the Divine Promises as belonging to us is of infinite Moment. *I will greatly rejoice, and trust in the Lord, my Soul shall be joiful in my God.* Isa. 61. 10. The general apprehension of God's Mercy is ineffectual to support us: and to claim a Title in him without a real Evidence, is vain. But a regular Trust, an applicative Faith, in conjunction with our sincere performing the Conditions of the Promises, is to a Christian, like the sacred locks of *Sampson*'s hair, whilst they remained, he was invincible; but when cut off, he became weak as other Men. Our Comforts rise and fall according to the stronger or weaker degrees of our Faith: *Peter* walked firm upon the Waves till he doubted, and then be-

began to ſink. One of the ſoreſt and moſt dangerous Temptations of the Afflicted is, that they are out of God's Favour. The Mourning Veil darkens the Eyes of their minds, that they cannot ſee his compaſſionate Countenance, they cannot reconcile his Gracious Promiſes with his Providential Diſpenſations; the good things he hath prepared for hereafter, with the Evils he ſends here. As *Gideon* complained to the Angel, *If God be with us, how comes all this Evil to us?* And the Spirit of Darkneſs takes the advantage of great Troubles to tempt ſad Souls to deſpondency, as if they were utterly forſaken of God. If this Temptation prevail, *if the Heavens be as Braſs, and the Earth as Iron*, if no Influences deſcend from above, and there be no Springs be-

low, if Divine and Human Comforts fail, there remains nothing but desperate Sorrow. S. *Austin*, to repel this Temptation, introduceth God answering the Afflicted and Discomforted: *Is this thy Faith? Did I promise Temporal Prosperity to you? Were you made a Christian for this, that you might flourish in this World?* The Faith of our Adoption is confirmed by his Corrections. If they are profitable to us, if we are refined, not hardned by the Fiery Trial, we have a clear Testimony of our Interest in him. Zech. 13 *I will bring them through the Fire, and they shall be refined as Silver and Gold is tryed; and they shall say the Lord is my God.*

Respondit tibi Deus, Haccine est fides tua? hac tibi promisi? Ad hac Christianus factus es ut in Seculo floreres?

Briefly, Let us strengthen our Faith of the glorious State, and our Title to it, and it will make us firm against all the violent Impressions of

of Adverſity; it will produce a joyful exultation even in the afflicted State. The Chriſtian that with ſtedfaſt Faith, and attentive Conſideration, looks on the ineſtimable, infinite Felicity, is regardleſs of all things in the World in compariſon with it. Sacred Hiſtory reports of *Saul* the Perſecutor, who was transformed into an Apoſtle, that a ſudden Light from Heaven of that exceſſive brightneſs encompaſſed him, that he was ſtruck blind, and ſaw no Man: This may be eaſily and juſtly applied to every ſincere Believer in a moral ſence; the firſt effect of the ſpiritual Light that ſhines in the Eyes of his Mind, and diſcovers unſeen eternal things, is to darken his ſight of the things that are temporal: Even the greateſt things here are not of ſuch moment

ment as to allure or terrify him from profecuting his bleſſed End. St. *Peter* declares of perſecuted Chriſtians, *That believing they rejoice with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.* 1 Pet. 1. 8. The Martyrs dearly embraced the Croſs of Chriſt, and prized the Thorns of his Crown, more than all the Roſes of Pleaſure, than all the Diadems of earthly Dignity, in *expectation* of the bleſſed *Reward*. *Tertullian* wrote to the noble Confeſſors of Chriſt that were impriſoned in *Africa*, *How willingly would we change our Proſperity with your precious Miſeries?* If weak nature be ſenſible of your hard Reſtraint and Sufferings, take flight by your Thoughts to Paradiſe. The Perſecutors cannot lay Fetters upon your Spirits, but when

Omnia Spiritui patent vagare ſpiritu, ſpatiare ſpiritu. Nihil crus ſentit in nervo cum animus in cœlo eſt. Ad Martyr.

you

you pleaſe you may aſcend to the Kingdom of God, where you ſhall reign for ever. In the mean time counterpoiſe the Darkneſs, and Straitneſs, the Loathſomneſs and Sufferings of your Priſon, with the Light and Amplitude, the Riches and Abundance, the Joy and Glory of the Celeſtial Kingdom, which no Words are ſignificant enough or worthy to expreſs. A Saint whoſe Bleſſedneſs is in Heaven, cannot be made utterly unhappy by Afflictions on Earth. He will ſerve God with as much Love and as good a Will, when poor, deſpiſed, diſconſolate, as in a flouriſhing condition, and with this peculiar ſatisfaction, that his ſincerity is then moſt evident: For the Service that is without reſpect

Nullus iis dolor eſt de incurſatione malorum præſentium, quibus fiducia eſt futurorum bonorum: Quid hoc ad Chriſtianos, quid ad Dei Servos? quos Paradiſus invitat, quos gratia omnis & copia Regni cœleſtis expectat? Cypr. *cont.* Demet.

ſpect to a preſent Sallary, is not baſe and mercenary for a temporal Intereſt. Beſides, that Obedience is more eminent and acceptable that is with Sufferings, and the Reward ſhall be anſwerable to our Obedience. One Draught of the River that makes glad the City of God above, can ſweeten all the bitterneſs of the World. In ſhort, the Chriſtians Hope is in the Apoſtle's Expreſſion, *The Anchor of the Soul ſure and ſtedfaſt, that enters within the Veil,* it is faſtened in Heaven, confirmed by the fidelity of God's Promiſes, and the prevailing Interceſſion of Chriſt, and ſecures us in the midſt of all the turbulent Agitations in the wide Sea below. Hope makes us not only patient but joyful in all our Sufferings. A Chriſtian encouraged by the bleſſed Hope, comes

comes with joy to Death, as the Door that opens to the Kingdom of Glory, and immortal bleſſedneſs.

Direct. 2. Let God be the ſupreme Object of our Eſteem and Affections; and whatſoever Evils we ſuſtain, will be made light and eaſy to us. The Apoſtle aſſures us, *That all things, even the moſt afflicting, work for the good of thoſe that love God.* Rom. 8. 28. That Heavenly Affection is not only the condition that intitles us to that Promiſe, that by ſpecial priviledge makes all the Evils of this World advantagious to the Saints, but 'tis the qualification by which 'tis accompliſhed. By Love we enjoy God, and Love will make us willing to do or ſuffer what he pleaſeth, that we may have fuller Communion with

with him. In God all perfections are in transcendent eminence, they are always the same and always new. He gives all things without any diminution of his Treasures: He receives the Praises and Services of the Angels without any advantage or increase of his Felicity. By possessing him, all that is amiable and excellent in the Creatures, may be enjoyed in a manner incomparably better than in the Creatures themselves. His infinite Goodness can supply all our wants, satisfy all our desires, allay all our Sorrows, conquer all our Fears. One Beam of his Countenance can *revive the Spirit dead in Sorrow*, and *buried in Despair*. The Prophet *Jeremy* in the Desolation of his Countrey, supports himself with his Interest in God.

Lam. 3. 24. *The Lord is my Portion, saith my Soul.*

The

The Expreſſion ſignifies the Truth and Strength of his affectionate choice of God as his chiefeſt Good. What Loſs can make a Chriſtian poor, whoſe Treaſure is above? What Danger anxious, whoſe Heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord? What Diſaſter unhappy, whoſe Bleſſedneſs is in Heaven? What Death can deſtroy him, whoſe Life is hid with Chriſt in God? Deprive him of all the contents of this World, yet by communion with God, Heaven deſcends to him, or he aſcends to Heaven, where God is all in all: The bleſſed Reward is not reſerved wholly till hereafter. Divine Joy is not deferred till our entrance into the Celeſtial Kingdom: There 'tis a refined Joy from all mixture of Sorrow, 'tis infinitely increaſed; there ſpiritual Joy meets eternal Joy;

Joy; but it begins here: The gracious Soul has a taſte and ſight how good the Lord is, as an earneſt of the fulneſs of Joy in Heaven. Hope brings ſome Leaves of the Tree of Life to refreſh us with their fragrancy; but Love, of its Fruits to ſtrengthen us. As tranſplanted Fruits, where the Soil is defective, and the Sun leſs favourable, are not of that Beauty and Goodneſs as in their Original Countrey; ſo heavenly Joys in this Life are inferior in their degree to thoſe of the bleſſed above, but they are very reviving.

Pſal. 94. 19. *In the multitude of my Thoughts within me, thy Comforts delight my Soul.* 'Tis the triumphant Exultation of the Prophet, *Although the Figtree ſhall*

Hab. 3. 17, 18. *not bloſſom, neither ſhall Fruit be in the Vines, the labour of the Olive ſhall fail, and the Fields ſhall yield no Meat,*

the

the Flock ſhall be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhall be no Herd in the Stalls: Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation. He ſuppoſeth himſelf in Extremity, utterly deſtitute not only of the Refreſhments, but Supports of Life; yet he knows how not only to be patient and contented, but joyful in the moſt forlorn Condition. Joy is an Affection proper to the happy State. *In the day of Proſperity, rejoice.* And in his deepeſt Affliction he had ſuch a Felicity in the favour of God, that no external want could diminiſh. The Tree of Life brought forth Fruits for every Month; Our bleſſed Redeemer typified by it, has Conſolations for the moſt deplorable and deſolate Condition. If he ſays to the afflicted Soul, I am thy Salvation,

and within a little while thou ſhalt be with me for ever in Glory, it ſufficeth. *Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I ſay, rejoice.* It is the moſt affectionate counſel of the Apoſtle. Theſe are not inacceſſible heights of Religion, and points of Perfection, to which none can arrive unleſs extraordinary Saints; but are the experimental practice of humble ſincere Chriſtians, that ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Whom have we in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth we deſire beſides thee.* The guilty principle of vexatious diſcontents and immoderate griefs, under outward loſſes and troubles, is a falſe Judgment; that God without the World is not ſufficient for our compleat Felicity: Who, unleſs a Perſon diſtracted and fooliſh, would ſay that the magnificent

cent Feaſt of *Ahaſuerus*, that was prepared to ſhew the Riches and Glory of his Kingdom, was mean and poor, becauſe there was not ſet before the numerous Gueſts in Diſhes of Gold, Graſs and Acorns, the Food of Brutes? 'Tis equal folly to imagine that God, who is an infinite Good, ſuitable to the ſpiritual immortal nature of the Soul, and all-ſufficient to fill the vaſt capacity and deſires of our angelical Faculties, the Underſtanding and Will, by his glorious Perfections; that God, I ſay, cannot make us happy in his Love, becauſe our lower animal Faculties, our Senſes, have not in our Communion with him what is pleaſing to their carnal Appetites. The *Spouſe* in the *Canticles* is repreſented as a *Lilly among Thorns*, incompaſſed and oppreſt

with injurious Enemies, yet ſhe breaks forth in triumphant Joy, *I am my Beloved's, and he is mine*; by an irrevocable donation ſhe gave her Heart to Chriſt, and reciprocally he gave himſelf to her; ſhe deſpiſed all inferiour things, and reſted in his Love as her ſole Felicity. In ſhort, none are concerned to loſe the weak light of a Candle at Noon day, when the Sun pours forth a deluge of Light to illuſtrate all things; and the Soul that enjoys the propitious Preſence of God, is ſatisfied therewith when lower Comforts fail.

Direct. 3. Let us moderate our Valuations and Affections to things below.

This is a Conſequence of the former; for if the Heart be full of God, it will not admit any inferior

ferior Object to rival him in his Throne. If we conſider the vaſt diſtance between the Perfections of the Creator, and the faint Reflections of them in the Creature, our Reſpects and Love ſhould be accordingly. Reaſon, Authority, Example, Experience convince us that all things below are empty Vanities; it is reſtleſs folly to ſeek for Happineſs here, and to borrow the Language of the Angel, *to ſeek the living among the dead.* If our Felicity be from the Light and Warmth of Creatures, how eaſily is it quenched, and we are in irrecoverable Darkneſs? When there is exorbitant Love, and diſſolute Joy in the poſſeſſing, there will be extreme and deſperate Sorrow in loſing. One irregular Paſſion feeds and maintains another. The Heart is diſpoſed to

contrary Extremities, and passes from the Fire to the Frost: The unequal Spirit swells or sinks according to the outward Condition. It is the wise advice of the Apostle, *that we rejoice as if we rejoiced not*, and then, *we shall weep as if we wept not*: Afflictions are intolerable or light, according to our apprehension of them; an indifferency of temper to the things of this World disposeth to Self-denial universally, as God is pleased to try us. This was the holy and happy temper of *David*, *Surely I behaved and quieted my self as a Child that is weaned of his Mother, my Soul is even as a weaned Child*; indifferent to manage a Scepter or a Sheep-hook, according to God's Pleasure. If we can deny our selves, we shall humbly yield to God. If we can sincerely say, *Not our Wills*, we shall

Pœnam de adversis mundi ille sentit, cui lætitia & gloria omnis in mundo est. Cyp. ad Demet.

Psal. 131.

ſhall readily repeat our Saviour's Submiſſion, *But thy Will be done.*

Direct. 4. A prudent forecaſt of poſſible Evils as future to us, arms us with Patience to ſuſtain them. Since Man was expelled from the terreſtrial Paradiſe, and is below the celeſtial, he is liable to innumerable afflicting Accidents. His condition here is like an open Sea, ſo voluble and inconſtant, ſo violent and furious: Sometimes the Ships are raiſed upon the top of the Waves, as if they ſailed in the Air; and ſometimes plunged into the Waters and ready to be ſwallowed up: Such frequent changes happen in our paſſage to Eternity, and it is mercifully ordered ſo by the Divine Wiſdom, that we may ſo uſe the World, as not to abuſe it, and our

ſelves by over-valuing and affecting it. It is a contemplation of *Theodoret*, that the *Sun* and *Moon*, the moſt glorious Luminaries of Heaven, and ſo beneficial to the Earth, would be honoured as Deities, if they always appeared with the ſame invariable tenour of Light: And therefore God wiſely diſpoſed of their Motions, that at the revolution of certain Periods, they ſhould ſuffer an Eclipſe, that the ignorant World might be convinced they were but parts of Nature appointed for the Service of Man, and are not worthy of divine Honour. Thus we ſee, that often the brighteſt and fulleſt Proſperity is eclipſed, to convince us by the miſerable changes in this World, that the beſt eſtate of Man is altogether Vanity, and that theſe things are utterly inſufficient

ficient to make us happy, and are not worthy of the chief Regard and Affection of our immortal Souls. To ſet our Hearts on them is to build on the Sand, and to expoſe our ſelves to ruinous Falls by every Storm. A ſudden blaſt overthrows the Fabrick of Fancy, our conceited Happineſs in the enjoyment of periſhing things. Our greateſt Comforts may occaſion our greateſt Afflictions: *The Glory of a Family may occaſion the Grief of it.* Now the conſideration of the mutable nature of things here below, keeps the Heart looſe from them, fortifies us with proper Thoughts to bear Evils that happen, and prevents Diſappointments, that is an aggravating circumſtance of our Troubles, and a great vexation to the Mind. The *Iſraelites* when tranſ-

ported

ported from the Land of *Canaan* to *Babylon*, felt the rigors of their Captivity the more ſenſibly, in that they were confident in their term and ſtate in that Land, as their permanent Inheritance: to be expelled from ſo rich a Country wherein they promiſed themſelves Reſt, was a high degree of their Miſery.

There is indeed a previſion of Evils that may befal us, that has Torment, that anticipates and exaſperates Miſery. *Fear*, that gives the Signal of approaching Evils, often brings more terrour than caution, and like a timerous *Centinel* by a falſe Allarm, aſtoniſhes rather than prepares the Mind to encounter with Danger. Our Saviour ſtrictly forbids ſuch perplexing apprehenſions of future Evils, as moſt unbecoming Chri-

Chriſtians, who are under the perpetual Providence of their heavenly Father. *Take no thought for the Morrow, the Morrow ſhall take thought for the things of it ſelf.* Mat. 6. 34 But on the contrary, to be ſecure in our Proſperity, as if we ſhould always enjoy a favourable courſe of things, as if our moſt flouriſhing Comforts did not ſpring from an earthly Original, and might be ſuddenly blaſted, or eaſily cut down, is to lay our ſelves open to ſurprizing Diſorders and Perplexities when Evils befal us. 'Tis the wiſe Counſel of St. *Peter* to Believers, *Think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery Trial, which is to try you, as if ſome ſtrange thing happened to you*: 1 Pet. 4. 12. For unexpected Adverſity falls upon the Soul in its full weight, and ſuddenly overthrows it. Uncomfortable Accidents

dents ſtrike to the Heart, when 'tis not arm'd to receive the Blow: Whereas the remembrance of our frail and fickle State, makes us leſs troubled in afflictive changes, becauſe prepared for what may happen to us.

Direct. 5. Serious and mournful Reflections upon our Guilt, and what we deſerve from divine Juſtice, is both a *Motive* and a *Means* to ſuppreſs Impatience and Indignation, and to allay inordinate grief in our Sufferings. We are directed by the wiſe Preacher, *In the Day of Adverſity conſider*: It is a proper ſeaſon to review Conſcience, *to ſearch and try our ways*, to take a ſad and ſerious examination of our Lives. If God ſhould exact the rigid ſcore of our Debts, and make us as miſerable as we are

are ſinful, yet there is the greateſt reaſon to juſtify him, and accuſe our ſelves; much more when our *Puniſhment* is far below our *Deſerts*.

Humility is the Mother of Meekneſs, they are Graces of the ſame Complexion and Features. Our Saviour in the order of the Beatitudes, firſt declared, *Bleſſed are the poor in Spirit*, that have a low conceit of themſelves, as nothing in Spirituals, and worſe than nothing in Sin; as empty of all that is Holy and Good, and compounded of all Evil: And *Bleſſed are thoſe that mourn*, in a ſence of their Sins: And then, *Bleſſed are the Meek*: And theſe are very congruouſly joyned, for Meekneſs is a Diſpoſition inſeparable from the other. He that duly conſiders himſelf to be a wretched Creature, a worthleſs

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Rebel, and is humbly and ſorrowfully affected for his unworthineſs, his Paſſions will be ſubdued; and as melted Metal receives any form, ſo he patiently ſuffers what God inflicts. *A broken Heart is an acceptable Sacrifice to God*, and implies a tender ſenſe of Sin, as the Offence and Diſhonour of the holy and gracious God, in alluſion to a broken Bone, that has an exquiſite ſenſe of any hurt: And it may be extended to ſignify a Heart that is compliant and ſubmiſſive to God's Will, in alluſion to a Horſe that is broken, and eaſily managed by the Reins of the Rider. Contrition for Sin is always joyned with Reſignation to the chaſtizing Providence of God.

Pſal. 51.

Beſides, Godly Sorrow will leſ-

leſſen natural Sorrow. Sin firſt deſerves our Grief, and the ſharpeſt accents of our Lamentation ſhould be placed upon it, and the more ſenſible we are of it, the lighter will Affliction be to us. As the opening a Vein ſtops by Revulſion, a flux of Blood in another part; ſo the turning the Stream of Sorrow, from Affliction to Sin, is a powerful means to make it ceaſe: There is Health in the bitterneſs of Phyſick, and Joy in the depth of this Sadneſs. Briefly, Repentance inclines the Heart of God, and opens his tender compaſſions to the Afflicted. We have an admirable example of this in the caſe of afflicted *Ephraim*; upon his Penitential complaint, the expreſſion of his Grief and ſhame for his Sin, God graciouſly anſwers, *Is* Ephraim *my dear Son? Is he* Jer. 31. 20.

he a pleasant Child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my Bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have Mercy on him, saith the Lord. When the relenting Sinner is covered with Tears, the great Comforter descends, and brings healing to the troubled Waters: this advice is more necessary for the Afflicted, because usually the stroaks of Providence are properly a Reproof and Correction for Sin: the application of a Corrosive, implies, that some corrupt matter is to be discharged; God is provoked by their neglects, and though Love cannot hate, it may be angry, and without renewing their Repentance, and recovering his Favour, their Afflictions are very uncomfortable. 'Tis extreamly sad to feel the sting of a guilty

guilty Conſcience within, and the diſpleaſure of God without. The Burthen is heavy and oppreſſing that is laid upon a wounded Back. It is therefore our beſt Wiſdom and Duty *to ſearch our Hearts and try our Ways, that we may diſcover what is the procuring cauſe of our Troubles, and turn unfeignedly to the Lord.* This will endear Afflicted Souls to God, and incline him to afford gracious ſupports to them. It is true, ſometimes our Sufferings are deſigned for Trial, eſpecially, when they are for Righteouſneſs ſake. Counterfeit Coin, though with a fair Stamp and Inſcription, is diſcovered by the Fire; thus meer titular Chriſtians, ſpecious Hypocrites, are made known by Perſecutions: but true ſubſtantial Gold endures the Fire without loſs, and the more 'tis tryed, the

more 'tis refined. Thus the true Christian, whom neither the gain of the World, nor the loss of Life can remove from the stedfast owning of the Holy Truth, has a clear manifestation of his Sincerity. And it is a peculiar favour and honour, when God calls forth his Servants to the hardest Trials for his Names sake; 'tis the noblest way of Service, a special Conformity to the Son of God, more glorious than the resembling his power in doing Miracles: In this the Saints here have a capacity of serving God above the Angels; for the obedience of the Angels is always joined with their Happiness, but the obedience of the Saints here, is often attended with Adversity, and is more valuable to them upon that account: As a Soldier of Courage and Generosity,

ty,

ty, when he is choſen from the reſt of the Army for ſome bold Exploit, values the choice of the General, as a ſignal mark of the eſteem of his Valour and Fidelity. *To you it is given, not only to believe, but to ſuffer for Chriſt's ſake.* This is juſt matter of Joy. Innocence with the faithful companion of it, a good Conſcience, makes our Sufferings from the rage and violence of Men, to be comfortable. There may be a Feaſt within the Houſe, when a Storm of Hail rattles upon the Tiles. But it is ſometimes ſo ordered by Divine Providence, that the Evils we ſuffer are of a mixt nature, partly Chaſtiſements, and partly Trials. This was the caſe of the Believing *Hebrews*, to whom the Apoſtle directs his Counſel; their Perſecution was from the unrighteous Heb. 12.

Pagans for a cauſe purely Religious, but 'twas permitted by the righteous God, as a puniſhment for their Sins. And here the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs is admirable, that the ſame Affliction is inſtrumental for the purifying of his Servants from Sin, and the advancement of his glorious Goſpel. The firſt and moſt immediate effect of his Diſcipline, is the humbling and ſanctifying them to prepare them for his Love, by which they are fortified to bear couragiouſly the worſt Evils for his ſake.

Direct. 6. Apply the Mind to conſider the Bleſſings we receive, as well as the Evils we endure. Whilſt the intence Thoughts are fixt upon the Croſs, the Soul is rackt with inward Tortures, but

did

did we turn our Eyes upon our Enjoyments, and the Comforts that are interwoven with our Troubles, it would be a means not only to compose us to Patience but Thankfulness. The Apostle directs us *to trust in the Living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy.* In the poorest and lowest state of Life, we have many Favours and effects of his rich Bounty, and it is the ignorance of our deservings and of our enjoyments that causeth Discontent and Murmuring under our Troubles. Particularly, this Consideration will be effectual to repress the Discontent that is apt to kindle in our Breasts, upon the sight of the different Dispensations of Providence; that some are exempted from the current Adversities of the World, and live in

1 Tim. 6. 17.

eaſe and pleaſure, whilſt we are deprived of many outward Comforts. Suppoſe a Sick perſon in extream Poverty, were received by a rich and liberal Lord into his Houſe, and convenient Food, and precious Medicines were provided for him, without his deſert or poſſibility of retribution; Would he be ſo fooliſh and inſolent, as to complain of unkind and unworthy uſage, becauſe ſome others in the Family have a more plentiful Table and richer Habit allowed them? On the contrary, let us look down to thoſe who are below us: How many are poor and miſerable in the want of all things needful for the ſupport of Life? How many are under tormenting pains, or in deſperate ſadneſs, and have no taſte and comfort in their abundance? How many are fallen

len into deep Miſery, and that aggravated by the afflicting Memory of former Happineſs? How many are ſurrounded by their cruel Enemies, and ſee no refuge, no ſanctuary for their eſcape, but a neceſſity of periſhing? And can we pretend a better title to the Mercies of God than our fellow-Worms? Our Original is from nothing, and our Works are ſinful; that we are not ſo deſolately miſerable as others, when equally Guilty, is from the rich goodneſs of God, and ſhould make us thankful.

Add further; Let the moſt afflicted Saint in the World compare his Condition with that of the moſt proſperous wicked Perſons, and the compariſon will be effectual to endear God to him, and

quiet his Passions under Sufferings.

The good things of this World in their abundance, variety, and excellence, cannot make a Sinner truely happy: the Miseries of this Life in all kinds and degrees, cannot make a good Man utterly miserable; nay they are inestimably more happy in their Sufferings than the Wicked in their Prosperity. *Manna* rains from Heaven while they are in the Wilderness, supports and comforts are from the Love of God shed abroad in their Hearts; and their present Afflictions are a Seed of Eternal Joy, qualify and prepare them for the Joy of Heaven. Our Saviour, from whose Judgment we receive the true Weights and Measures of things, to regulate our Esteem and Affections, declares his

his Diſciples when under the ſharpeſt Perſecutions of the Tongues or Hands of their Enemies, under Diſgrace, Calumnies, Tortures and Death, even then he declares them *Bleſſed, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them*; & Heaven is ſuch a tranſcendent Bleſſedneſs, that the lively hope of it as the reward and end of our Afflictions makes us Bleſſed here. And the moſt proſperous Sinners, are by the ſame infallible Rule, miſerable here; for the irreſiſtible, irremediable Miſery that is ordain'd and prepar'd for them in Hell. They would deceive themſelves with the Paintings of Happineſs, with an aiery imaginary happineſs; whilſt the Senſes are filled, the Soul is empty; but they ſhall not long enjoy the eaſe of their ignorance and ſecurity; the World

World can do no more to make them happy, than if one ſhould compound and temper a draught, and give it to the Poor and Miſerable, that induces Sleep and pleaſant Dreams for a few hours, but when they awake they are ſtill poor and miſerable. Our Saviour pronounceth a Woe to the rich and full, *to thoſe that laugh now, for they ſhall weep and mourn*: their falſe deceitful felicity will end in real Miſery. It is †S. *Auſtin's* Queſtion, Who would not prefer Grief with a ſober Mind before the Jollity of a Phrenzy? Who would be a merry Mad-Man? for he is only happy in his Fancy, and fancies himſelf ſo, only becauſe he is Diſtracted; and according to the Rules of true Wiſdom, the worſt eſtate of a Saint, when lamenting and languiſhing under Troubles, is

* *Si duo iſta proponantur videre vis aut flere? Quis eſt qui reſpondeat niſi videre? Sed tantum prævalet invictiſſima veritas ut eligat homo ſanâmente flere, quâ mente alienata videre.* Auguſt. *Tract. de Epiſt.*

is more eligible than the beſt eſtate of a Sinner when triumphing in Proſperity.

Direct. 7. Laſtly; Frequent and fervent Prayer to the Father of Mercies, and God of all Conſolation, is a bleſſed means to ſupport the Spirit, and make it humble and obedient to the Afflicting Providence of God. 'Tis Divine Counſel, *Is any Afflicted? let him Pray.* 'Tis Prayer opens the Heart, and carnal Grief breaths out; Prayer opens Heaven, and Divine Joy flows into the Soul; the King of Glory keeps no State, there is always eaſie acceſs to his Throne, and his Ears are always open to his humble Suppliants. His moſt gracious Nature inclines him to ſuſtain us in our dejections. We have a powerful Plea

Plea from his Compassions to encourage our Prayers in great Troubles. *He will regard the Prayer of the destitute, and not despise their Prayer.* The most glorious Attribute of the Spirit, *the Comforter*, is most useful and beneficial to afflicted Suppliants; Affliction is the Season, and Prayer the Sphere of his Activity. That our Prayers may prevail, these following Rules must be observed.

1. They must be addressed with an humble trust on the Mercies of God, that incline him to relieve and sustain the afflicted. Thus St.
Jam. 1.6. *James* directs the Afflicted, *to ask in Faith, nothing wavering.* We read in Scripture of his Bowels, the light of his Countenance, his melting Eye, the soft, serene, compassionate Expresses of his most gracious Nature towards his suffering

fering People. He doth not eſteem himſelf more honoured with the glorious Titles of our Creator and King, than with the amiable endearing Name of our Father; and with a confidence becoming that relation, we are directed by his Divine Son to make our requeſts to him. 'Tis recorded of *Auguſtus* the Emperour, that when one preſented a Petition to him in a timerous and ſhy manner, that generous Prince, whoſe Humanity was equal to his Dignity, was moved with diſpleaſure, as if it had been a tacit reproach that he was of an untractable fierce Nature. Thus 'tis a diſparagement of God's benignity and clemency, when we pray to him in a diffident manner: He is more pleaſed in doing of us good, than we can be in receiving it. Indeed,

Videris obolum porrigere elephanti. Macrob.

if

if the Promiſes of God did not encourage our Hopes, we ſhould not preſume ſo much of his affection, as to lay the burden of our Cares and Sorrows on his Arms; but Heaven is not fuller of Stars to enlighten the darkneſs of the Night, than the Scripture is of precious Promiſes for the refreſhing the diſconſolate. When the Church complained, *The Lord hath forſaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me*; What aſſurance does he give of his moſt tender and unchangeable Love to her; *Can a Woman forget her ſucking Child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the Son of her Womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands*: If he cannot forget himſelf, he cannot forget his People.

Iſa. 49. 14, 15, 16.

'Tis

'Tis his dear Title, *God that comforts thoſe who are caſt down.* 2 Cor. 7.

Add to this, the intereſt of the Saints in Jeſus Chriſt, who ever lives to make Interceſſion for them. None is more tenderly inclined to Mercy, than he that has ſuffered Miſery: And he felt our Sorrows that he might afford relief and ſuccour to us. Whilſt our Saviour was upon the Earth, and was followed by a multitude of diſeaſed miſerable Perſons, Vertue went out of him and healed them all: And ſince his Aſcent to Heaven, has he withdrawn that univerſal Healing Vertue, and left us under irremediable and unmitigable Sorrows? Did his compaſſionate Eye regard all that were afflicted, and are we now out of his ſight? Then ſuch was his indulgent Humility, that altho he could have

have performed the Cure by a Word, yet he readily offered to attend a ſick Servant, *I will come and heal him*; and now he is raiſed from his humble ſtate on Earth to the Throne of Heaven, does he diſdain to extend his merciful Hand for our Relief? No, his Heart and Love is the ſame in Heaven as upon the Earth. 'Tis true he is exempted from all paſſionate Frailties, all afflicting Affections that are inconſiſtent with the Felicity and Glory of his Kingdom: But he ſtill retains the ſame ſolid Love, the ſame God-like Compaſſion, the ſame ready Will to ſupport and deliver his People in Miſery. Nay, if the change of his ſtate could have made any in him, it could be no other than what is recorded to the immortal Honour of *Veſpatian*, by one that had

had experience of his royal Bounty: That the raising him to the Imperial Throne made no alteration in his Breast, but that his Power was enlarged equal to his Will of doing Good. Our Saviour in his exaltation at the right Hand of God, has all Power equal to his infinite Love that is suitable to the permanent relation between him and the Saints: He is their Head, and they his Members: And was there ever such a Miracle, or rather Monster in Nature, that the Head the most eminent part, the Seat of all the Senses, did not resent a Wound made in the Foot, the lowest and most servile part of the Body? Does it not presently express its real Complaints? For the natural union of the parts, communicates the sence of the pain suffered by any to the whole.

Nec quicquam in te mutavit fortunæ amplitudo, nisi ut prodesse tantundem possis & velles. Plin.

whole. And such is the spiritual Union, between the divine Head and his Members, that from Heaven he rebuk'd the cruel Persecutor of the Saints, in language expressing the connexion of Charity between himself and them, *Saul, Why persecutest thou me?* He does not say why persecutest thou my Saints, why my Servants, but *Why me?* Tho he is not capable of any sorrowful sence, yet his Affections are quick and vigorous to his People. If it were possible that his Joy, wherewith he is infinitely blessed, should be increas'd, it would be in the effusions of his Goodness to afflicted Christians. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need.* How heavy soever the Calamities are, let

Non dicit quid sanctos meos, quid servos meos, sed quid me persequeris? Aug.

let them not ſink our Spirits into Deſpair, but raiſe them to nearer approaches to the God of Conſolation.

2. The Prayers of the afflicted muſt be always with ſubmiſſive deference to the Will and Wiſdom of God, as to the manner, the degrees, and time of his delivering them. Afflictions are not peremptory and immutable Diſpenſations, but conditional for holy and good Ends, and we may humbly pray for their removal. 'Tis no reſiſting of Providence, to addreſs to the divine Majeſty with frequent and fervent Requeſts, that he would pleaſe to take his chaſtizing Hand off from us. Upon *David's* humble Prayer, the deſtroying Angel was commanded to ceaſe; in the midſt of Judgment Mercy interpoſed, *It is enough.* But

we are apt to be impatient in our Troubles, and by hasty impetuous desires of Ease and Deliverance, disturb our tranquility, and offend God. As those who are diseased with a Rheumatism, being worse in the Night than the Day, impatiently long for the rising Sun to dispel the oppressing Humors, and cheer their Spirits: So in our Afflictions we impatiently renew our Requests, *Lord, How long? Lord, make haste*, not reposing our selves on his Wisdom and Goodness, who will do what is best for us. God is both our Father and Physician, and when the corrupt Humours are purged away, will give Cordials and Restoratives to his afflicted Children. The Prophet tells us, *He that believes makes not haste*, he doth not by undue means seek to remedy his Evils, nor passionately

sionately and unquietly sollicite the accomplishment of the Promises before the season appointed by the divine Decree, for that is to desire that his Mercy should be displayed to the prejudice of his Immutability, but humbly waits God's Pleasure.

3. Let the main desires of the Afflicted be for Divine Grace, (which is never more necessary and useful than in Troubles) that they may glorify God, and obtain their eminent End, the Salvation of their Souls by them. We are often very ardent in our Prayers for trivial things, neglecting the most necessary and important. As if a Prisoner loaden with Irons should passionately intreat, that his Chains should be gilded, not loosed. How many spend their zealous Affections in praying for temporal things,

wherein their Happineſs does not conſiſt. One of the reaſons why God heaps upon rebellious Sinners the good things of this Life, is to inſtruct us how deſpicable they are in his account, things to be thrown away, as he ſeems to do. And he often refuſes the Petitions of his Servants concerning temporal things: When *Pelopidus* interceded with *Epaminondas* the wiſe Governor of the *Thebans*, for the freedom of a baſe Fellow that for ſome Crime was committed to Priſon, he denied his Requeſt; and preſently releaſed him upon the deſire of a vile Harlot: And gave this reaſon, it was a favour not worthy the dignity of *Pelopidas*, but ſuitable to the quality of ſuch a Petitioner.

Non audit Deus niſi quod dignum ducit ſuis beneficiis. Arab.

And ſometimes we pray for things dangerous and hurtful to our

our Souls; and 'tis becoming the Providence and Love of our heavenly Father to deny our ill-counſelled deſires. Let us therefore be more intent and importunate in our Petitions, that our Afflictions may be ſanctified, then removed. We have neither Underſtanding nor Strength, how to order our ſelves, how to bear and improve great Afflictions. St. *Paul* declares, *I have learned in every Condition to be content*? By the Revelation of the Goſpel, and the Holy Spirits teaching that all his earthly troubles ſhould end in the heavenly glory, he was inſtructed in that Science of the Saints. We are therefore directed, *If any Man want Wiſdom*, that is, how to manage himſelf patiently under Afflictions, *let him ask it of God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not.* Jam. 1.

If Afflictions are ſore and ſudden, it is very hard to compoſe and ſupport the Spirit. The Paſſions are Servants of Senſe, rather than obedient to Reaſon, and by their firſt violent Motions ſurprize the Mind, and overcome it before it perceives the Aſſault; he that is not a Maſter, isa Slave to them. Or ſuppoſe no angry Reſiſtance, no impetuous Paſſions in the afflicted Breaſt, yet the Heart bleeds inwardly, and faints away. *David* had natural courage to encounter a Lion, yet he was ſo diſconſolate in his troubles that he was fain to argue againſt his Sadneſs: *Why art*
Pſal. 42. *thou caſt down O my Soul, why art thou diſquieted within me?* And having raiſed his drooping Spirits, yet he relapſed to his firſt Faintneſs, till by ſupplies from God he was confirmed in hope of Deliverance.

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The Apoſtle implores the glorious Power of God, That the *Coloſſians* might be *ſtrengthned with all Might, unto all Patience, and Long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs.* Col. 1. We ſhould ſink under heavy Sufferings, or be tired with the length of Miſeries, without his immortal Strength. But if the Power of God aſſiſt a weak Spirit, it will be finally victorious over all the Evils of the World. How many Martyrs of the tender Sex, who would naturally tremble at a drawn Sword; yet by divine Support deſpiſed the Tormentors, and all the Inſtruments of Cruelty. In them was an imitation of that Miracle of divine Power, when the three Children walked in the midſt of the flaming Furnace, untouch'd by the Fire. God is ſtiled *the God of Patience and Conſolation.* It is his ſole

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Prerogative to comfort the afflicted. *I, even I, am he that comforts you.* The Woman in the Gospel that had a bloody Issue, no human Art could afford her aid and relief: And when her Estate was wasted on the Physitians, and her Strength by her Disease, she came to our Saviour, and by touching the Hem of his Garment was presently healed. Thus the afflicted Spirit, whom no worldly things are able to support and make joyful, finds everlasting comfort in God. He satisfies the Soul with his Love, and establishes this Persuasion, *That all things shall turn for the best to his People.* Now by Prayer the divine Power and Favour is engaged for our support and deliverance. How many Psalms of *David* begin in Tears, and end in Triumph? In his great Exigency, when

when ready to be ſwallowed up by his Enemies, he diſpatch'd a flying Prayer to Heaven for relief; *Lord, take hold of Shield, and Buckler, and ſtand up for my help*: And the Almighty appeared in Arms for his Reſcue. And he recounts another bleſſed experience of the efficacy of Prayer, *In the day when I cryed, thou anſwered'ſt me: and ſtrengtheneſt me with ſtrength in my Soul.* The Affliction was ſtill incumbent, but did not overwhelm him: which was a more gracious teſtimony of God's love, than if it had meerly been taken away. It is ſaid of the diſtreſſed, *They looked to him and were lightned.* It is the Perfection and Propriety of the Saints in Heaven to ſee the glorious Face of God without Veil or Shadow; but here ſome Rayes of his quickning Counte-

Pſal. 138.

Pſal. 34. 5.

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nance comfort his afflicted Servants, while they lift up their Eyes and Hearts to his Sanctuary, a joyful Light breaks forth, that leads them out of the dark Labyrinth of their troubled Thoughts. If the Saints remain disconsolate, it is not for want of Mercy and Power in God to refresh their Sorrows, but from neglecting to improve their Interest in him, and deriving Spiritual Comforts from his fulness by humble believing Prayer. When the Disciples were surprized with a Storm in the Sea of *Tiberias*, they toil'd with hard labour to save the Ship that was like to be over-whelmed by the Waves: but all in vain, till by their Cries they waked our Saviour who was asleep in the Ship. *He lifts up his Head, and the proud Waves presently sink; he speaks a word of Command, and*

and the boisterous Winds are silent; and a great Tempest is changed into a great Calm. This may fitly represent the afflicted state of a Christian, their Passions swell into a Storm, they are ready to be overwhelm'd with Troubles, but 'tis because Christ sleeps in them; they have his Presence as if they had it not, but earnest constant Prayer will awake him, and his propitious Presence will secure them from Shipwrack, and make their Breasts the true Pacifick Sea, and bring them safely to the Blessed Eternal Shore.

Si non dormiret in te Christus, tempestates istas non pateteris. Ideo fluctuabat Navis quia Christus dormiebat: Navis tua cor tuum. Aug.

Briefly; God teaches us to profit by our Afflictions, and this affords matter of Joy and Thanksgiving. The Psalmist declares, *Blessed is the Man whom thou chastenest and instructest out of thy Law.* The Divine Teacher gives a right un-

understanding of Sufferings, for what end they are sent, and teacheth by the voice of the Rod to obey his Word, He instructs us in our Duty with the clearest Convictions, and infuseth gracious dispositions suitable to his Doctrine. He gives directing Light, and a seeing Eye to perceive it; he presents Heavenly Encouragements, and prepares the Heart to receive them. Now what *Paul* speaks of the Cross of Christ, is applicable to the Crosses of the Saints: *God forbid that I should glory but in the Cross of Christ, by which the World is crucified to me, and I to it.* The Cross of Christ made the Jews and Pagans to despise and reject the Gospel, esteeming it to be gross folly to expect a glorious Immortal Life from one who was ignominiously put to Death;

Death; yet that was the great Argument of the Apoſtles triumphant Joy, becauſe he felt the Vertue of it to unbind the charms of the World, ſo admired by carnal Eyes. He looked upon it with the ſame diſaffection and diſregard, as one that is near expiring: it appeared in his Eyes rather as a loathſom object, than with amiable qualities.

And if the Croſs of a Chriſtian be the means of internal Mortification, if thereby this vain deceiving World be rendered contemptible to him, and his Affections are inflamed to things above, he will find cauſe to glory in Tribulation. To conclude this Argument;

There is no Affliction how great ſoever, though with reſpect to natural means unremovable and

and unmitigable, yet if it be sanctified by Divine Grace, a Christian even while he is so afflicted, has more cause of Joy than Grief, more reason to bless God for it than to repine and complain. *In every thing give Thanks, for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* 1 Thess. 1. 5. He turns Afflictions into Benefits, and our affectionate Praises are due upon that account.

FINIS.